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HO! for a British Bride

By

T. MULLETT ELLIS.

This Daring Novel

had to be written and must be read. Its theme is the impending Royal Marriages of the young English Princes. All references in the book to His Majesty the King and to other members of the Royal Family are written in the most loyal spirit.

The Author fearlessly dwells on the importance of the Re-Anglicization of the English Crown through Marriages of the Royal Princes with brides of strictly British birth and lineage. The hero is a Royal Prince, the heroine a sweet English girl. Around these twain is woven a Love STORY OF THRILLING INTEREST.

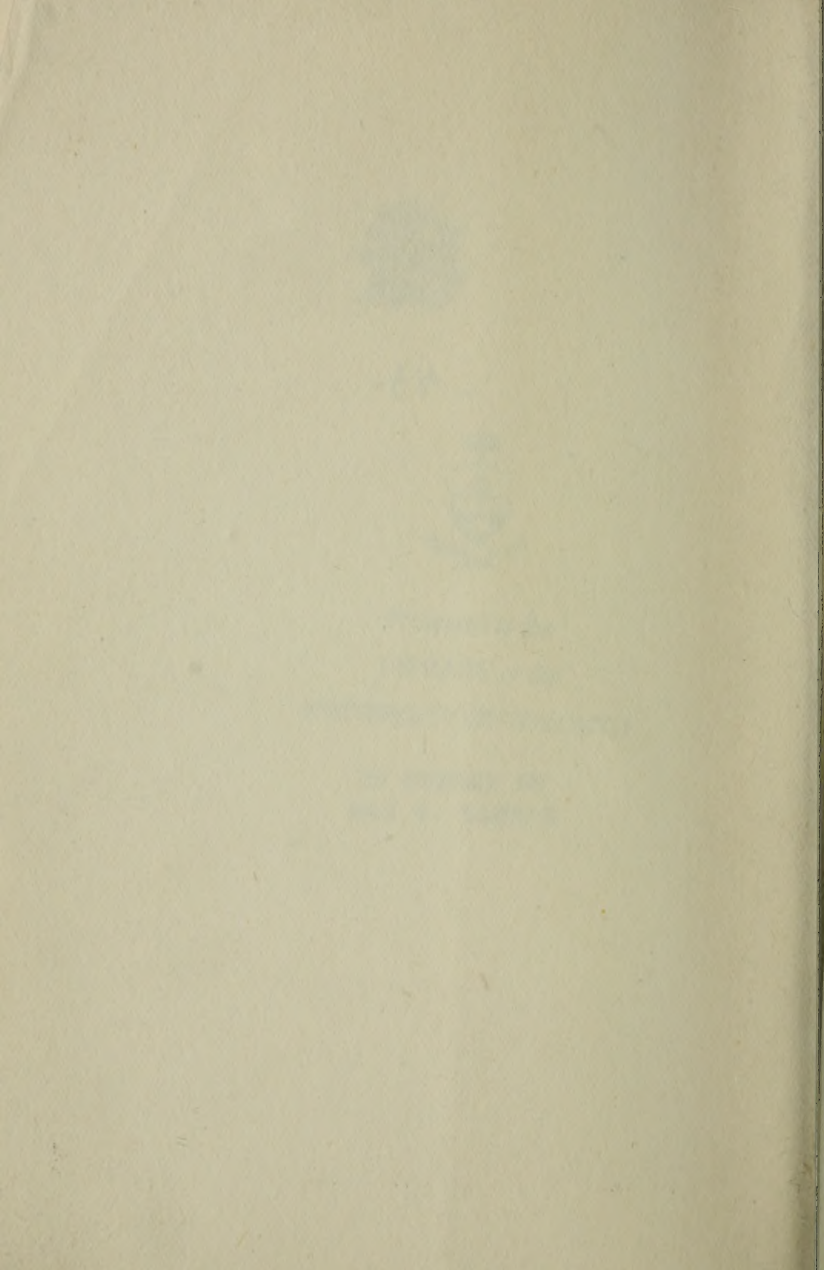


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HO! FOR A BRITISH BRIDE

A NOVEL



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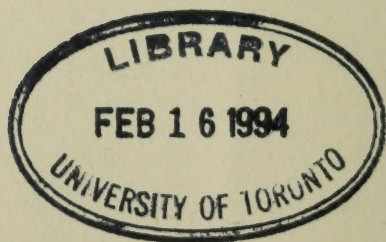
BY

T. MULLETT ELLIS

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"WHAT CAN A WOMAN DO FOR THE EMPIRE?"

—
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FOREWORD

THROUGH the courtesy of the Editor of the "Daily Chronicle" I am indebted to Mr. J. M. Bullock, M.A., of the "Graphic," for permission to reproduce the Genealogical Table appearing opposite page 78 of this book.

This was constructed by Mr. Bullock, and was published in the "Daily Chronicle" on the 24th October, 1914. It was one of an interesting series of diagrams prepared to shew the inter-relationships of the Royal Families of Europe. It was not drawn up for the purpose of illustrating the special points I deal with in "*What can a Woman do for the Empire?*" which, indeed, when the kind permission to republish his table was granted me by Mr.

FOREWORD

Bullock, were only forming in my mind and had not taken any definite shape, even in manuscript.

The Second Table, facing page 230, simply contains facts that can be prepared by any schoolboy from the ordinary English History books in use in Government Schools; but put in their tabular form they are clearly seen at a glance.

WHAT CAN A WOMAN DO FOR THE EMPIRE?

CHAPTER I

HIS MAJESTY THE KING

THROUGH the most central and crowded streets of London, throbbing as they were with a busy traffic, congested with motor-'buses, taxi-cabs, and heavy market-carts, and with carriages and vehicles of every kind, including the news-vendor's bicycle and the coster-monger's barrow, there passed at a speed that, considering the thronged condition of the thoroughfare, was no less than miraculous, and without pause or hesitation at any point, three motor-cars, at intervals of some thirty or forty seconds. In

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the first was no one known to the general world, although all the police along the route, who were singularly alert, saluted the keen-faced man who sat behind its chauffeur, and quietly facilitated, though without the least fuss or trouble, the progress of the car. In the second, besides the chauffeur and a footman, were two other occupants, upon one of whom all eyes, by some sudden magnetic influence, centred and were held intent.

There was something strikingly singular in the manner in which these three motor-cars shot through those busy streets. There seemed to be in the air for a few moments before they passed by a premonitory hush. The traffic everywhere appeared to be held up. The police on duty were in a strange state of expectancy, all looking in the direction whence the cars appeared, and, after they had whizzed by, remaining in a statuesque pose, their right hands still at the salute. One naturally be-

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came awake to a sensation of the unusual, and looking around noticed that many men in the crowd stood bare-headed, hat in hand. And then there dawned the idea in one's immediate memory of one of the faces that had just flashed by one had seen—the King.

So it was. His Majesty King George the Fifth, King of Great Britain and Ireland, her Colonies and Dependencies, Emperor of India, and himself one of the busiest men in his own busy Empire, had sped thus impressively through the heart of the world's metropolis on his crowded path of duty.

The tide of traffic began to flow again, and the streets resumed their normal state.

It was during the early days of the War. London was full of men whose hearts were set upon doing individually all that in them lay for England's sake. Tinker, tailor, soldier, sailor, rich man, poor man, beggar man, thief—even the last of these included—all were

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dwelling on the hope that they might be able to do something for the land of their birth, for the country they loved.

Most of them did what they could without stint, and many did much. And many gave themselves with all they had, even their life, to their country and their King.

Hearty as the response was throughout the length and breadth of Britain, to the call upon all Britons to do their duty in this supreme crisis of Britain's need, none heard the trumpet-call more clearly, none answered it more promptly or more loyally than the King himself. He set himself heart and soul to strive for his Country, for England, for Britain, for his Empire, for that vast Empire that is ours, as well as the King's, our heritage of splendour, and he set to all his people a noble example which they have followed nobly too.

Few realize how hard-worked a man is the King. His daily duties are almost over-

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whelming even in normal times of peace, but now that the innumerable calls brought on him from all points of the compass by the War compel his attention, the duties falling to his lot—duties some of them not less irksome because they are merely formal, some of them trifling, some Colonial, some National, some Imperial, some International, but all of them imperative—absorb the crowded hours of one of the busiest of men. Far from shirking his mass of tasks, he has fulfilled them to the utmost, with single-minded purpose, and has made himself a pattern to his people of Duty realized and Duty zealously performed.

From the Royal Family to the humblest of his subjects there has been demonstrated throughout the Empire a spontaneous and loyal determination to sustain his Majesty in the onerous task that has fallen upon his shoulders, whatever the cost in men, money or material, and the people everywhere have rallied to

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emulate the splendid example the Sovereign has set.

The Prince of Wales, the first of his subjects, early seconded his Father's efforts by signifying his desire to share the burdens of war as a soldier in the fighting line. In vain did high authority endeavour to repress him. The young Prince would not be withheld, and joining the National Forces in Flanders, gallantly took his turn in the trenches under the fire of the enemy, that the youth of our country might have a lead in dutifulness and loyalty.

The aristocracy, habitually traduced and maligned as it had been during recent years by a section of a political party, suddenly became the real leaders of the men—the worthiest ones—who did most for England; that is to say, of the men who from the first were ready to fight her battles, the soldiers who were hurried to the front of War. These valorous officers, the pride and flower of Britain, many of them

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young, handsome, titled, rich, threw themselves with stern joy into the brunt of war, courageously led their gallant men in the van of the fighting line, and bravely risked all in sacrifice for their country. Half their number gloriously died on the battlefield.

They did not die in vain.

The People, thrilled by such splendid heroism, flocked to the Colours. Men who knew nothing of War, and detested militarism, laid down their tools, gave up the tape and the yard measure, abandoned the office and the mart, enlisted and donned khaki. The Politicians ceased their jargon. The Ministers (none of whom, by the admission of the late Chancellor of the Exchequer, believed in the possibility of War with Germany a month before it broke out, and notwithstanding their previous blind neglect of manifest duty), were sustained in office by their political opponents, so that England might display to the enemy and exhibit to the whole world, a united people.

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The women of the nation shared in the common zeal, partook in the great sacrifice, and gladly gave their sons, their husbands, their brothers, to the War. As at home, so in the Colonies. The whole Empire was united, as it has never been in the whole course of her history.

Amongst the stream of vehicles that had been held up for a minute or two as the King passed by in the manner we have described, was a taxicab, in which was seated a lady of middle-age, with a little Pekinese dog in her lap. She had seen and quickly recognized the King, unexpected though his appearance had been, and, in the way we all do, she set her mind to draw inferences as to whither he was going and upon what duty he was bound.

She was sure strong duty led him. Though there was an entire absence of any state or ceremony about his passing, she knew that in these

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strenuous days every hour of his life was expended in national service, and though she could not guess what the immediate cause of his passing presence was, she felt that he was on kingly business. She was glad to witness him go by in this simple business-like manner, through the business-centre of his dominions and amongst the busy, quiet, almost silent people, and her lips moved in an unuttered prayer for her Sovereign and her Country.

She was a lady of little importance in the world, residing usually alone. A self-contained and self-reliant woman she was, and consequently disposed to be perhaps somewhat self-sufficient and comfortably complaisant. Her face was pleasing and what the Scotch call "bonny," the expression was so frank and honest. Her hair and eyes were brown. Her brow rather stern. Her lips were full and often parted in a smile, showing good sound teeth; but her character came out most in her

strong jaw and in two strong lines about it that marked a determined nature and a resolute will.

It would have been a good face for a man. Yet it was a womanly face enough, full of amiability and human kindness.

Her simple dress, her quiet style, her reserved demeanour, marked her unmistakably an English gentlewoman.

Both her parents were dead. Her only brother, much older than herself, was occasionally at home with her, when ashore. He was, as his father before him had been, a naval officer, but of late years his home had seen little of him, for he was in the China Squadron, though his ship was now homeward bound. It was likely to be in Plymouth Sound before the end of the month.

Miss Smith—Euphemia Eliza Smith, as she was unmercifully named—was on her way home to the little village of Mead-Menham in Berkshire, when she fortuitously caught this passing

HIS MAJESTY THE KING

glimpse of the King. She was impressed by the fleeting vision. It set her thinking—thinking.

——Thinking of what she—a woman—could do for England.

She, a lonely, useless woman—so her thought ran in self-disparagement. She could knit. She did knit. She could join patriotic and benevolent societies—had done so, and felt how little she and they were doing, despite the clamour they all made amongst them. She would that she could do more.

What could she do for England? Her father had died gloriously in the Service. Her brother was a useful servant of the nation. But she was only a woman. What could a woman do for England?

Though she thought modestly of herself, she did not look with disparagement upon her sex. She believed in the feminine capacity. By no means did she belittle the place of woman in the world.

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She knitted all the way from Paddington to Slough, and thence to her village station on the branch line; and she knitted her stern brows as well as her mittens, without, however, arriving at any solution of the question that so persistently haunted her brain. What could a woman do for England?

CHAPTER II

LADY MARY VERE

For days Miss Smith's mind remained intent upon the question which the passing-by of the King had so curiously set before her as a meditative task—and still she propounded it to herself whenever her thoughts were free.

She had now staying with her as guest for a few days, a Miss Meakin, a dear friend, but quite a nonentity: not a thoughtful woman—rather a frivolous creature, indeed—a light-haired, colourless lady. It was useless to propound any serious riddle to her—except for the reason that the mere act of talking is always beneficial to women. Like a man's habit of

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swearing, it lets off superfluous energy and conduces to a calm mind.

The two old maids—though they were both too young yet to be fairly so described—were going to a wedding in the neighbourhood, and were traversing the road between Mead-Menham and Rockingham.

“ I am more than ever convinced,” said Miss Smith, as her motor whisked round the corner of the road and nearly upset her centre of gravity—“ yes, I am more convinced than ever of the power of the individual. I care not how insignificant he may be, a man of strong will can achieve anything. If he be but patient and determined there is no limit to his power.”

“ Ah—a man. A man! Men can do things if they will, I suppose,” Miss Meakin answered. “ But we women—poor things!—how little can we achieve. Despite the claims of our shrieking sisters, who are becomingly silent since the War began—thank heaven!—women are born

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to succumb. Subserviency and submission are ours by Nature, and weakness is the most notable feminine quality that characterises our sex. There are exceptions, of course—but even the exceptions—— ”

“ My dear! I can listen to you no longer,” Miss Smith interrupted. “ You positively shock me. I must contradict you flatly—though I am unwilling, for the moment, to deviate into a defence of womankind. I was not talking of men or of women, but of will. But if you consider it from the standpoint of sex, it is my firm conviction that the power of a woman is equal, if indeed it is not superior, to the power of a man—not her physical power, of course—I don’t mean that—but her will-power.”

“ Her will-power? ”

“ Her will-power I said, and I mean her will-power,” Miss Smith repeated with asperity. “ A woman has as much power to

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achieve as man has. The power of the individual is her's every bit as much as it is man's. She doesn't always achieve in the masculine way, but she does—or rather she can—achieve, if she will. It depends on that. If she will achieve she may.”

“ Achieve what? ”

“ Achieve anything. Do. Accomplish. That's what I mean. It is a human faculty. Who wills, may. Few do: man or woman. But those who will, may.” Miss Smith turned as she spoke, and looked at her companion full in the face, as though she would read something from her unintelligent expression—utterly blank though it was—if only to demonstrate her thesis.

Then meditatively and as one speaking to herself rather than as in conversation with another, she reflected: “ Yes. This power of the individual. The power of the insignificant. It has nothing to do with sex at all—power of will.”

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“ I confess my will-power is of the slightest,” Miss Meakin interjected with a feeble giggle.

“ In some human beings it is innate. A person wills. A person. Yes, just an individual being. A person wills—and the whole course of the world is altered. A person wills, and an Empire is ruined—or built up.”

Miss Smith pursed up her firm mouth as she made her deliverance, looking for the moment very masculine.

“ A person. Not a Government: not a Commander-in-Chief, nor the General of an Army—but just a corporal with three men. He sees an enemy-gun bombarding the key of a position. He resolves to take it. He steals out of a trench in the dead of night. He destroys the enemy—seizes the gun—saves the position. All has depended on that incident—even the whole campaign.”

“ Well, anyway, here we are now,” replied

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her companion, with a gasp of relief, and leaning over the side of the car to stare ahead. "Here's the church; we're coming to it; that is, it's not a quarter of a mile away. But such a lot of people! We shall have to go into queue, dear. Shall we get out and walk?"

"Why? The pavement is sure to be crowded. No. Let us stay in the car. We shall get to the church all in good time. Those in front of us will not be very long settling down. Do you see anything of your brother?"

"No. We are to meet him after the wedding, Effie. He will escort us to the reception. I expect we shall find him in our car when we come out of church."

The wedding the two ladies spoke of was a great social event. The bride was the eldest daughter of the Duke and Duchess of Rockingham, but, interesting though she was, not only because of her distinguished parentage, but because of her many amiable graces, her accom-

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plishments and beauty, the bridegroom, the Earl of Morchester, was a very hero, and the thoughts of everyone present were intent upon him.

A man of great possessions and of high mental attainments, as well as a peer of the realm, he had been one of the first Englishmen to embark for the War. He led his regiment through many perils during the terrible yet glorious retreat from Mons, but was stricken at le Cateau, having no less than six several wounds in the face alone, besides a shot over the region of the heart that would have undoubtedly proved fatal, but for the intervention of a silver cigarette case, whereby the bullet was diverted. He was invalided home and made remarkable recovery. His face wounds were all from shrapnel, and with the exception of one on the left side of his jaw, none of them was serious.

Early in the new year he hoped to rejoin his

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regiment in Flanders, for his injuries proved to be less severe than had been feared. He had been attended at home by skilled nurses, one of whom—a qualified and extremely capable lady—was a near relative. During his illness he had been constantly visited by Lady Elizabeth Vere, to whom he was previously engaged, and whom he was now to marry.

Beautiful though the bride was in her white satin dress entirely covered by a voluminous veil and a flounce of old Brussels lace (which had been worn a hundred years ago by one of her ancestors at the celebrated ball at Brussels on the eve of the battle of Waterloo), all eyes in the crowded church sought the bridegroom yet more eagerly.

He was not in khaki. His black morning-coat accentuated the pallor of his features, for he had lost a good deal of blood on the battlefield, and his diet during recovery had been restricted and meagre. But though pale he

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looked very handsome. His strong, manly features and firm lips accorded well with his commanding physique and erect and soldierly appearance. His tall military bearing would have rendered him conspicuous anywhere.

There was an unusual solemnity in the service, for it was common knowledge that the Earl, prompted by a noble sense of patriotic duty, would very soon set out again for the War. Nearly one half of the officers of his regiment had already in four short months been either killed or wounded, and not a soul present in the congregation failed to realize even in this happy hour, that the stern figure of Death, like a threat of doom, stood very near, and that His haunting shadow was quite likely to fall even in the immediate future upon the little group at the altar rail.

The bride, turning to her husband as the ring was placed upon her finger, looked up at him with the awe of this thought almost visible in

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her eyes. His were full of pride and joy and solicitude. A merry light shone in them, but the prevalent solemnity was within him too. His earldom would become extinct unless she bore to him a son.

He loved her because she was meet to be his wife, a beautiful, accomplished, tender-hearted woman, but even more because his hope was yet to be in the fruit of her womb.

Few in the church, from the Duke and Duchess to the humblest retainer present, failed to pass this thought through their minds.

If he fell——?

If he lived it would be in pride and honour. If he fell it would be in glory and for the glory of England.

If he fell or if he lived, through her the continuity of his race might issue, and the consciousness of this thought—prompted by the literal words of the marriage service—was a presence in the bride, as upon the arm of her

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hero she walked through the people towards the West door of the church at the conclusion of the sacrament.

Merrily and loud rang the joy-bells, and the crowding people stared with awe at the wounded hero—type of so many other splendid Englishmen—as he led out his bride, so soon to leave her at his country's call, it might be for death, it would surely be for honour and for glory.

The reception was at Rockingham. As soon as they came out of Church, Miss Smith and her friend sought their car, beside which, as they anticipated, Miss Meakin's brother was waiting for them.

The run to Rockingham was soon made, the road thither being crowded by motor-cars and carriages, full of people bent on the same errand as themselves. The avenue drive through the Park was choked with vehicles of every description.

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The great drawing-room seemed already full as Miss Smith and her friend arrived. Their names were called so loudly that Miss Smith felt almost overcome when she advanced towards the bride and bridegroom, both of whom received her with extended hands so smilingly, though she only knew the bride.

Behind the Earl and Countess of Morchester were the Duke and Duchess, as well as the bride's sister, Lady Mary Vere. The sight of so much grand company was almost overwhelming to modest little Miss Smith, who was unaccustomed to Society crushes, or to crowds of any kind.

Their reception over, Miss Smith, with Alice and Robert Meakin, sauntered past the array of presents. There were a vast number of them, many costly, many of modest value from humble friends, many of very imposing appearance from public bodies and associations. One from the Mayor and Town Council of the

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Borough of Rockingham—a vast complete breakfast, tea and dinner service, with plates and dishes, glass, cutlery and silver complete—required an entire room for its display—a room with three tables. Another, in quieter taste and occupying less space, was from the Earl's tenants in Morchester. One touching memento was a gold-mounted bullet that had wounded a brother-officer in his own regiment. The wounded man, when dying in hospital, sent it to his lieutenant, asking that the bride might wear it as a mascot, and that her husband would hasten back to avenge him. There were gifts from soldiers in the ranks, and one from a corporal whose life the Earl had saved during the great retreat.

So many presents indeed there were that Miss Smith and her friends went through a very maze of them, and after a while they became so weary of looking at them that to find the presents they had themselves personally given became their only remaining interest.

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This quest, as they laughingly admitted to each other, became quite exciting, "almost sporting" Alice Meakin dubbed it, and then somehow they found themselves in the celebrated Louis Seize drawing-room, and the presence of no less than four policemen in uniform indicated the value of the gifts that were there on view. They included, of course, magnificent jewelled ornaments from the Duke and Duchess, and splendid gifts wrought in diamonds and pearls from the bridegroom. After slowly filing past the dazzling array of gems, and duly feasting their eyes, they went out on to the terrace. It was a gloriously sunny afternoon: no one could imagine it to be November.

The gardens were neat, late though the season was, and the beds and borders, if bare of flowers, were pleasingly trim and orderly. The lawns were verdant, and the gravel walks were gay with the richly-coloured dresses of the ladies, who gathered together in many-hued

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clusters, greeting and gossiping and laughing. The gentlemen, too, in their glossy hats and dressy, fashion-plate style, combined to make the scene bright and *chic*.

Everyone was flocking to the Palm Houses. (Rockingham, of course—we need not remind the reader—is celebrated for its winter-gardens.) Under the dome of the great glass house which adjoins the Banqueting Hall, all the guests were now assembling, for there the bride was to cut the wedding-cake. The pop of flying champagne-corks was already beginning a merry music, and the element of hilarity which should never be absent from a wedding was bubbling up everywhere.

“ Euphemia Eliza,” cried a mocking voice, and Miss Smith, thus laughingly accosted by her full Christian names, turned to behold the smiling face of the bride’s sister, Lady Mary Vere.

She was excited and full of *verve*. Her dark

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eyes were lit with fun. All the crowding people jostling together in the usually sombre house where she had spent so much of her life, the air of *camaraderie* between them all, so much pleasanter to breathe than the somewhat frigid atmosphere that generally filled the stately chambers of the ducal residence, the sense of gaiety and freedom about and around her everywhere, gratified and delighted this charming and natural young woman who, in the general way, saw so little of nature amongst humanity.

Miss Smith, quickened also by the prevalent pervading spirit of gladness, turned a beaming face on Lady Mary, and, grasping her hand, warmly responded to the merry greeting.

Not for two—nearly for three years—had they met.

Miss Smith was the daughter of that well-known Rear-Admiral Smith, the Arctic Explorer, whose heroic death in Green Ice Sound,

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nearly twenty years ago, closed a noble life in the glamour of Fame. A stern, bluff old sailor, he despised popular applause, but, as his death was sudden, his mortal ears were spared these acclamations. His widow, however, whose duty it was to honour him, honoured his memory none the less because it was honoured by the nation. A statue on Yarmouth front perpetuates his name, and indicates, both to the townsman and the tripper, the position of the Municipal Public Lavatories. For England is a practical country, and every statue she rears to her illustrious sons is not allowed to remain a mere work of art, the pedestalled chronicle in marble or bronze of individual glory, but is also turned to public if ignoble use. Who would not seek renown in a country which thus rewards the memory of her noblest heroes?

However, the dignity of sculpture, the mockery of Fame, the conscience of ratepayers, the vulgarity of Urban Councillors, are not sub-

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jects we are out to exploit. Suffice it that the widow, who was left in straightened circumstances, received a modest pension, and was provided with apartments at Hampton Court Palace, where she and her daughter resided for seventeen years.

In the same wing of the Palace there lived in those days a very old lady—one Lady Emberill—a great-aunt on the maternal side, of Lady Mary Vere's, and there and then it was that Miss Smith, "Euphemia Eliza," as she was always spoken of by the rather formal old lady, became familiar friends; for Lady Mary, then but a child herself, was frequently taken to see her great-aunt in the stately old Palace; she spent days with her as a visitor, and made the acquaintance amongst others then in the Palace apartments, of Mrs. Smith and her daughter, frequently roaming with them in those noble gardens which are so admirably kept, and so wisely open to the enjoyment of the people.

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“ I have an old slipper here for Bessie,” whispered Lady Mary, laughingly, to Miss Smith, in eager confidence, as she furtively exhibited a symptom of it peeping out of its hiding-place in her bridesmaid’s dress. “ And rice! Banks is to bring me a bag of it as she goes away. Help me to throw it, Euphemia Eliza. The more she gets the more her luck will be.”

“ She deserves luck—if only for *his* sake,” Miss Smith answered. “ The hero! ”

“ The hero. Bless him! ” she replied with a touch of the emotion that, in the latter half of the year 1914, English people, despite their usual reserve, allowed themselves to exhibit. “ Dear Bess! How I shall miss her! But you? It’s years, Euphemia Eliza, isn’t it?—since we last met. When was it? We were out with the York and Ainstey. What a run we had! ”

“ Three years ago, wasn’t it? ” and Miss Smith’s fine sound teeth glistened in a smile.

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“ That cub! ” cried Lady Mary, sparkling.
“ Do you remember how he popped out of cover, Effie, right between our horse’s legs, his timid, appealing eyes as he looked up at us, and how pretty he looked as he stole away. Do you? Do you remember how we agreed we wouldn’t let on—how we took the poor devil’s side and wanted him to win away? ”

“ And how the hounds began to whine in spite of our wishes—and the view halloo, Mary.”

“ Old huntsman Jack’s view halloo! ”

“ Yes, and your halloo, Lady Mary, your wild halloo, too.”

“ When the hounds burst into music? Yes. And then what a run he gave us. What a run! What a splen—— ”

“ Lady Mary,” a bland voice interjected, “ his Grace and the bride are waiting for you to join them.”

She turned round almost testily. The

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heightened colour faded from her beautiful, sweet face, the gaiety vanished from her dark hazel eyes.

“ May I lead you to them? ” asked the same soft, suave voice, the speaker offering his arm.

She looked at him stonily, and, taking his arm, went away—another woman.

Miss Smith followed her friend only with her eyes. Alice Meakin sat at a little table in a secluded corner under the palms, her brother having set a chair for her. This too he now did for Miss Smith, whilst a servant brought them some wine.

“ It is chilled,” said the footman, pouring out the champagne.

“ Chilled,” repeated Miss Smith, glancing at Alice Meakin. “ Frozen! ”

“ Who is that man? ” asked Alice Meakin, appealing to her brother as he watched the bubbles dancing in his foaming glass. “ He has given Effie the shivers.”

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“ Effie,” i.e. Miss Smith, shrugged her shoulders contemptuously.

“ That! That is Ambrose Vandaleur, the K.C. The member for Ammering. The Attorney-General of the future—so the prophets say. A handsome man, so most ladies tell us—and, certes, a very clever fellow.”

“ Handsome—with those basilisk eyes,” Miss Smith exclaimed. “ Clever—with that smooth suave tongue—— ”

“ The Duke thinks the world of him. In effect he is his man of business; his right hand. Gossips say that when Lady Mary is to be wed, Vandaleur will play the part of the bridegroom.”

“ That he never shall,” declared Miss Smith, and taking up her glass, which was full to the brim, she drank it in one draught.

“ My dear! ” Alice Meakin exclaimed, reprovingly, looking around her in a shocked way, and hoping that the palms under which

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they were half-hidden had sheltered them from view, "whatever will people think of you? Whatever are you thinking of—staring like that? We are not in a ship's cabin, remember."

"I am thinking of Mary. What could such a woman do for England? So sweet, so beautiful—this great Duke's daughter. Sweeter, dearer, even than her sister, even than the bride to-day. What could not such a woman do for England?"

CHAPTER III

THE LITTLE HOUSE AT MEAD-MENHAM

TOWARDS the end of the late Mrs. Smith's residence at Hampton Court, she inherited a substantial competency and frequently expressed her intention of vacating the apartments graciously placed at her disposal by the King, but ill-health enfeebled her, and before she had strength to carry out her intention she died.

Miss Smith had a brother much older than herself, who, like his father, was in the sea-service. He was nearly always with his ship in foreign seas, but he had a house in the pretty village of Mead-Menham, not many miles from Windsor, though even on the rare occasions when he was home on leave he rarely visited it.

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It was not until her mother died that Miss Smith took up her residence at her brother's house in Mead-Menham.

The house was ordinary enough, with its dining-room, drawing-room, morning-room, and the rest of it, all formally furnished in the regular manner as ordained by the upholsterer (see his catalogue). But until Effie Smith went to live there the house had been little occupied, except such portion of it as had been used by an old couple who had the servants' quarters. Miss Smith found it difficult to fit herself into the upholsterer's furniture, and she was a long time getting used to it. Not until her brother had a long spell ashore, and lived in a homely way with his sister, did he realise how uncomfortable it all was. Not indeed until he had built out a large new room with a spacious window in the sun, and a cosy fireplace with seats right up to the chimney-piece, did he ever really feel at home there—and then the drawing-room

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and the morning-room were hardly ever used. The new room—"the Snuggery," as Commander Smith named it—became the one room that was constantly used by both of them, though it was handed over entirely to Miss Smith.

"Mind! this is your room, sister, every yard of it. You're to put what you like in it, do what you like in it, use it as you will." His smile was full and hearty, very like his sister's. "It is your own room, Effie, as all the house is yours, but this especially is your room, this new cabin. I have built it for you."

And she did as her brother wished. She did put in it just what she wanted, especially a roomy, high-backed easy-chair for her brother,—“the three-decker,” he called it. On either of three sides one could nestle against its padded height, and make oneself cosy in its cushioned embrace. She filled all the nooks and panelled corners of the irregular room with

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things made for comfort. It became really like a ship's cabin, so full of cupboards it was. One of the bays she caused to be wired in from floor to ceiling for her canaries.

She had several birds and two dogs.

She was very fond of her pets; she had always loved them: she had brought them with her from her mother's old quarters at Hampton Court, and they seemed to link the old home with the new.

They lived happily together at Mead-Menham for a few months, brother and sister both feeling that they had there a veritable home of their own—the English paradise—their castle.

When the new room was furnished and fitted with all sorts of comfortable surroundings, “just as they were beginning to really like it,” as the Commander grumbled on leaving, he had to sail for the China seas again.

So Effie Smith was left a lonely but a very happy creature. Her servants had been her

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mother's, and loved her. As I have just written, she had her birds, and her dogs—one for indoors, bred from Pekinese brought to England by her own brother from the Royal Palace at Peking, whence this breed of dogs is derived; and for outdoors a Sealyham, as clever a dog as ever roamed a ditch in search of a rat. The Sealyham—though it was really her dog—she always regarded as her brother's. When he was ashore it would follow him everywhere, and dog and man grew to be very devoted to each other.

“ He's a good 'un,” Commander Smith used to say, “ a regular fighting tyke; a downright Tynesider.”

“ I don't like mongrels,” Effie Smith would say to her friends. “ I know there are sometimes good sports amongst 'em, and I can put up with their faults if I must, but I believe in blood—race—pedigree. A well-bred dog for me, if you please. Blood always tells.”

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“Oto, of Eppingdale,” was her favourite, because it was her brother’s gift. His ancestors had literally been worshipped. It is death for anyone outside the Palace of Peking to dare to possess a dog of this breed. They are held sacred in China, where they have been idolized for upwards of 2,000 years. And Oto was the guardian of her house; he lived inside, and strutted about the Snuggery as though he was the owner of the whole place.

The Snuggery was never quite finished. There was for ever something to do in it—if it was only to paste up some snippet which pleased her fancy from an illustrated newspaper, and which she wished to hold in her mind’s eye. She had a corner in the room for such scissors-and-paste effects. She hated anything “arty”—especially upholsterer’s artiness.

Not that the room was devoid of good pictures. She had a Hemy that brought the actual smack of the sea and the breath of the

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ocean-wind into the nostrils every time one glanced at it; and a Gribble—one of Bernard Gribble's best—a glorious sea-piece with an old Spanish galleon attacked by pirates—British pirates—bristling sea-dogs to a man. Better still, she had a genuine Gainsborough pastoral, full of the tears and smiles of April, with a rainbow beyond the elms, and sheep crowding the rugged road, and there was a devout old Italian piece attributed to Fra Angelico, but more like Benedetto; and there was a fine sombre portrait of her father by Frank Holl; a stern determined manly sailor the old admiral must have been.

But the picture to which she had given the place of honour was a portrait of a child.

“ I shall put the Prince there,” she had said to her brother. “ Alone—dominating all the other pictures, and separate from the rest.”

“ How like himself it is—and how like his grandfather the boy is growing,” Commander Smith had answered. “ The place is well

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chosen, Effie. "There let his picture be," and he added, in a reverent undertone, as though speaking to himself, in the habit that sailors form perhaps whilst pacing the lonely bridge o' nights at sea, "God bless his Royal Highness, and prosper him."

The portrait of the Prince was not by a known artist. It had been painted at Hampton Court by one of the girl-students who frequented the picture-galleries there in order to copy the old masters. Old Lady Emberill had given the girl-artist a commission for it, and at her death it came through Mrs. Smith to her daughter Effie.

Other things might be noted in the room that were not quite usual. A pair of globes—one geographical, the other astronomical, relics of her grandmother's girlhood. These were handsomely mounted on rosewood stands of the Chippendale period, and from the unfinished plan of Australia and the bareness of the African

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Continent delineated upon one of the globes, it was obvious that great strides in knowledge of the geography of the world had been made since the young student for whose instruction these globes had been prepared was born. There was also a model of H.M.S. "Calliope," which her brother had once commanded, and upon her desk, in a silver frame, was a very pleasing photograph of Lady Mary Vere. A sweet woman it showed. But it did not give her colour as a portrait in oils would have done. Her complexion, delicate as an English rose, her tender eyes laughing in their depths of hazel, her pretty graces were not in the photograph. But a slender, elegant creature with refined features, an exquisite woman in a dainty gown, was pictured agreeably and truly and effectively enough.

Miss Smith, alone in her room, regarded this now with fixed interest.

Though, until a day or two previously, she

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had seen nothing of her for nearly three years, she was truly fond of Lady Mary Vere, and this affection was renewed by the incident, slight as it was, which had occurred at the Earl of Morchester's wedding. The young girl had been so sweet, so flushed with natural joy when she met her old friend, and had accosted her so gaily, that the thought of the sombre change that came over her so suddenly when Vandaleur addressed her, checking and blighting all that fulness of beautiful happiness in which she had been revelling, still spread the gloom of it in Effie's kindly sympathetic bosom. She grieved. She endeavoured to divine the cause and nature of the unhappiness that had unquestionably been laid bare in that bright young creature's heart, and she speculated upon it with wonder.

Miss Smith sat back in her chair now with knitted brows. She saw in imagination Vandaleur's chill gaze, and shuddered at the

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thought that this man was to fasten his baleful influence over that fair young life. She knew, for she had seen; knew the man's power over the girl's will, though she did not know why or how it was exercised. She could not understand it, but it was clear some sadness brooded over Lady Mary through this man.

Nor did she speculate over much what that sadness was. She accepted unquestionably Robert Meakin's version of the truth. Vandaleur was intending to fasten himself upon the girl and make her his own, unwelcome to her though his attentions obviously were. He was ready to enact that terrible tragedy, so often played on life's dreary stage, the tragedy endured by a suffering woman compelled against her will to the society, the life-companionship of a man odious to her, and himself callous to the suffering he brings. Vandaleur, with his cold calculating nature, could play the part of the unloved husband to perfection; he would revel in the rôle.

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Patience, submission, long-suffering, meekness. There are some women, as Miss Smith now mused (and her lips curled with an unuttered sarcasm as the thought passed through her mind) who stoop, as it were, under the compulsion of some feminine weakness, to enjoy the gentleness of endurance, and who submit meekly to the infliction of undeserved and unfruitful sorrow, content to fondle the heel of trampling man.

To an old maid—and though she was not really an old maid, yet there was ever something of the old maid in Miss Smith; even when she was very young she had been so much with elderly folk—no tragedy appears more terrible. To her imagination such an apprehension appears more awful even than the reality. Effie Smith wrung her hands at the horror of it.

What influence had Vandaleur brought to bear on Lady Mary that she shivered at his touch, yet yielded to his will? That he had

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influence with the Duke was clear. But the Duke of Rockingham, wealthy, able, intellectual—a power in the councils of his country—how was it his keen mind did not observe what Effie Smith had intuitively learned in the flash of a moment?

The Duchess, worldly though she was, had the reputation of being an amiable woman and a fond mother. Was the Duchess blind, too, to the threatening cloud that gloomed over her daughter's whole future?

With such musings Miss Smith brooded over her young friend, until, in a maze of pondering she questioned the basis of her apprehensions. What evidence was there that Vandaleur was the girl's accepted suitor? Nay, the report was avowedly but a gossip's rumour.

She swung round in her chair. The evening paper was brought to her. She turned from her reflections, and was immediately absorbed in the news of the War. Every line interested

her. She scanned column after column. The details were of interest, but there was little really fresh since the morning's news. She laid aside her paper, but in so doing her eye fell upon the name of Vandaleur.

She raised the newspaper again. Yes, it was about the Vandaleur—Lionel Vandaleur, Esquire, K.C. His name was often in the public eye. He was member for Ammering. He had filled for some time and with distinction, an important post under Government. And now, she read, he was raised to the Peerage, in his own name. This was the Duke's doing, she surmised, and Vandaleur would do something in return for the Duke. *Do ut des.*

As Lord Vandaleur, she reflected, laying down her newspaper again, he was a fitter match for Lady Mary Vere. Her fears for her friend were confirmed; not in any degree allayed. But how could she thwart the blow that threatened her friend?

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Alice Meakin, who had been Effie's guest for a week or two past, and who had been out that afternoon in the village near by to do a little shopping, now stole into the Snuggery. She noticed, although normally a dull-witted woman, that Effie was much engrossed, and she was withdrawing as quietly as she had entered, when Effie called to her.

“ Don't go, Alice. Tea will be in directly. Here is the ‘ Pall Mall.’ There is no great news—except that Mr. Vandaleur—he whom we saw at the wedding, you remember—is Mr. Vandaleur no longer. He is raised to the Peerage.”

“ So? Truly! But this is news! Then your friend, Lady Mary—at least she will not have to marry a commoner.”

“ It would be no come-down, Alice—it would not necessarily be any come-down for Lady Mary Vere if she did marry a commoner. Though she is a Duke's daughter, it need be

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no come-down. There are hundreds of commoners in England of just as good family as the Veres of Rockingham.”

“ I do not dispute it, Effie,” replied Alice Meakin. “ It is a commonplace that amongst the untitled families in this country, just amongst the ordinary gentry, there are people of as good birth and untarnished lineage as amongst the aristocracy. If you mean that, I agree with you entirely, dear.”

“ Precisely, Alice. For who are the English Dukes? Don’t take me for a dreadful Radical: as you know, I honour our aristocracy. To Marlborough, to Wellington, every Englishman owes a world of gratitude. But for John Churchill, England’s martial glory would not shine so brightly. But for Arthur Wellesley—not so much through Waterloo—but because of Torres Vedras and the long years’ struggle in the Peninsular, all England might now be under the vassaldom of the heirs of

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Napoleon Bonaparte. Britons can never be grateful enough to those two men, and to Nelson. My father taught me that. They deserved all the honour we ever gave them—and infinitely more. But there are other Dukes—— ”

“ You mean Monmouth, Richmond, Cleveland, and all the other heirs of Charles the Second’s odious mistresses? ”

“ Yes. Half-a-dozen of our Dukes derive their title and estates through the amours of this dissolute King. You have not mentioned Grafton, Northumberland, St. Albans.”

“ The orange-woman’s son.”

“ Well—perhaps that trollop, Nell Gwynne, deserves some dilatory praise from women, for she has had so much abuse from us. If the first Duke of St. Albans had such a woman for his mother, the King, by ennobling her son, did ennoble all our sex. So the gallantry of the Second Charles, my dear Alice, was to us all.

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Let us look at things as cheerfully as we can."

"If you mean that he loved women in the plural, and not *a* woman——"

"Loved! Enough of them——" interrupted Miss Smith more sternly, and with a magisterial wave of her hand. "Old maids like our two selves will never understand men—and of all men, Charles. After all, he was King of England, and, as my brother would say, it is our bounden duty to honour the King.

"But though I have made disparaging statements, Alice, there is—as I was saying before—no truer believer in the aristocratic principle than myself. An aristocracy is essential to the Monarchy, and like all worthy English people, I am Monarchist, Loyalist, Royalist, up to my very chin. Isn't it wonderful how loyal the English people—nay, how loyal all true Britons have been all through this crisis?"

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“ Even the thieves! Even the criminal classes! There has been less crime since the war began.”

“ Yes, I do think that fact is one of the fine things about this dreadful business. Upon my word, if Bill Sikes were really alive now, I believe he would have enlisted. I shall think more kindly of the thieving class for the rest of my days. I scarcely regarded them as human before. Now I respect them, for, sure enough, some of them are brave men—and only wanted opportunity, outlet, for their manlier qualities.”

“ Yes, Effie, even I have been struck by the loyalty of the thieves. The people everywhere have been splendid in their fealty.”

“ Everywhere they have been loyal to the King, loyal to the Crown. They have themselves to answer for it that we could not be loyal to all the Family—because the Family has fought against itself. The members of the Royal Family are at war with each other.”

CHAPTER IV

THE PORTRAIT OF THE PRINCE

THE two old maids—as we unjustly persist in terming these ladies (since these words were written they have both married)—these two most excellent ladies went on steadily with their knitting for some little while in a silence broken only by the gentle tic-toc of the clock, Alice continuing the more persistently, for Miss Smith seemed occupied with her thoughts, and stared continually with an absorbed air at the portrait of the Prince, whose large, intelligent, light-blue eyes looked down from the wall upon her as though they were alive.

“ You have been gazing at that picture,

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Effie, for a long half-hour. Whatever are you thinking of? ”

“ I am thinking of the Prince. Upon him so much may depend for our country.”

Alice Meakin heard, and went on with her knitting. She was making mittens for our soldiers in France and Flanders. She was thinking, as the rain beat against the window panes and the wind rumbled gustily in the chimney, how cold and wet it would be for our poor troops in the trenches.

“ So much—possibly,” Effie continued musingly. “ It may be that some day he may come to the throne. Who knows? More unlikely things have happened. And I was thinking, too, of Lady Mary. Why should a Royal Prince be barred from marrying the daughter of an English Duke? ”

Alice vibrated with a sudden start.

“ If it comes to that,” she replied, “ why should an English Prince be barred from marrying the daughter of an English gentle-

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man. We established to our own satisfaction a few minutes ago that the blood in the veins of many commoners runs bluer than in some of the Dukes."

"Quite so. But I am talking seriously, Alice. Nothing can be said against the Duke of Rockingham. His family is linked through long generations with the best and noblest in Britain. There is no bar sinister upon his escutcheon. And Lady Mary herself is sweetness, purity, grace, dignity—everything that is good and desirable. Her age, her rank, everything fits her for the hand of the Prince. She has no disqualification—unless it is that she is not a German."

"Effie!" screamed the other, laying down her knitting.

"There is enough German blood in the English Crown," Miss Smith continued imperturbably.

Miss Meakin was manifestly shocked, and

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sat for a minute or two silently pondering. Then she remarked in a positive way:

“ But, my dear, you forget. Royalty may not marry into the family of a subject.”

“ I know. The Royal Marriages Act.”

“ Oh, I can’t say. I know nothing exactly about particular Acts of Parliament. But everybody knows Royalty doesn’t marry out of its rank. Royalty only marries Royalty.”

“ As a rule it is so—in our Royal Family.”

“ Yes, and not the English Royal Family only. It is the universal custom. Russia, you remember. When the Grand Duke Michael, who was a son of the late Czar, married the Countess Torby, it had to be morganatic. The Czar would not give his consent.”

“ I know. I know. But the present Czar has remedied that. The Grand Duke is immensely honoured both in England and in Russia. Both he, his wife, and his daughters. They are loved and honoured by our King and

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by all who know them, not here only but in all the Courts of Europe.”

“ Then Italy. It is not long ago. Don’t you remember, Effie, how the newspapers were full of it—for months. The King of Italy’s brother wanted to marry that American girl—what was her name? Senator Elkin’s daughter. King Victor Emmanuel would not give his assent—and they never did marry. The Duc d’Abruzzi it was—I think. He was after the girl for years; but the King of Italy—— ”

“ Italy! We all love Italy. But can’t we English people act in these matters without reference to other nations? ”

“ Well, the Duke of Fife did marry King Edward’s daughter.”

“ True enough. But on her marriage arrangements were made concerning her rights to the succession, both for herself and her heirs, I think—I’m not quite certain.”

“ But was that so when the son of the Duke

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of Argyll married Princess Louise? Queen Victoria was a great stickler for Royal etiquette as you well know, Effie, yet she allowed her daughter to marry the Marquis of Lorne."

"But there were no children of that marriage. Ah, well! the old Queen was a wise old lady, you know. I dare say she knew what she was about—besides, she always had a kind side to Scotch people. Anyway, precedent or no precedent, why should not the Prince and Lady Mary Vere be a good match?"

"Is it proposed?" asked Miss Meakin, breathlessly.

"No. It is only a thought of my own. It has been buzzing in my brain for days; indeed, ever since I saw dear Mary shivering under the blight of that hateful man with the basilisk eyes—that detestable lawyer-person Vandaleur."

"Dreams, my dear Effie, dreams. Dreams as regards Vandaleur, very likely. But most certainly as regards the Prince: wild, wild dreams."

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Again they knitted awhile in silence, until it was interrupted by a double-rap at the door.

“ The postman! And quite a budget,” remarked Alice, glancing through the casement.

The maid brought in the letters. There were two for Miss Smith’s guest; the others were for herself. One from her brother she opened and read at once. His ship was getting ready to join the fleet in the North Sea with Admiral Jellicoe’s squadron. The second letter—a business one—she set aside. The third she opened, and with a cry of pleasure.

“ From the Prince,” she exclaimed, smiling, and reading it eagerly.

“ From the Prince! ”

“ Yes,” she repeated, all her teeth shining in a gay laugh. “ He is to honour me with a visit. How proud he has made me.”

She waved the letter gaily over her head, and passed the brief announcement to her friend.

“ On Wednesday, I see.”

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“ Yes. He is to come next Wednesday. There will be time to turn out the drawing-room on Monday, and this room on Tuesday. I shall receive His Highness here—in the Snuggery. We must be spick and span. I shall have help for the maids. Nowhere a speck of dust in the whole house.”

“ My visit to you ends on the Monday, you know, dear. But meanwhile I can help you a little, perhaps.”

“ My dear, you must stay. It will be a pleasure to you to—— ”

“ Pleasure! Darling Effie, it will be an honour I shall remember all the days of my life. To help you to receive his Royal Highness—why it gratifies me more than words can express. It is just like you to be so kind.”

“ And I shall ask Lady Mary. I shall not tell her the Prince is coming. But I will press her to visit us for just a few days. She must come on Tuesday. We must hurry to get the

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house ready, Alice. She will motor over—that is if she comes. I hope she will accept. I will urge her as eloquently as ever my pen can write. I am sure she would like to visit me; she said she would the other day; and oh! how she must sigh to get away from the pestering of that detestable man, that odious Vandaleur.”

“ I think she will accept your invitation, Effie. Young people rarely decline when asked on a visit. The young love change.”

“ And my brother! I will wire him! His ship is at Plymouth, and when he last wrote me he was hoping to have a few days ashore. I will let him know the Prince is coming. I wonder if I can do anything more to put the dear canaries at their best.”

She went to the canary-cage, which consisted in fact of an entire bay wired off from the rest of the room from floor to ceiling. It was indeed an aviary with a wire-work door made large enough for anyone to walk through into the

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cage. It was full of birds, which flew on to Miss Smith's hands and shoulders as she entered the cage, so tame they were. They were not even afraid of her dog Oto, who strutted into the aviary behind her. She fed the birds from her hands with dainties from the tea-table.

There were nooks and breeding-cages within the aviary, so that some of the canaries were separated from the others at will.

"How pretty they are, the darling tame creatures," said Miss Meakin, admiringly.

"And the Prince is so fond of them—or so, at least, he used to be. It is my canaries, you know, dear, the Prince is really coming to see. They are the attraction—not poor Miss Smith. I am not vain enough to think his Royal Highness comes here on purpose to see poor me. When we lived at Hampton Court I had an aviary then. And it was through our canaries that I ever knew the Prince at all."

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“ Tell me how, exactly.”

“ Why, mother had apartments at the Palace, and near us old Lady Emberill—who, by-the-by, was some relation of the Duchess of Rockingham—occupied apartments also. His Royal Highness, who was quite an infant then, used occasionally to be taken to see Lady Emberill, because in her younger days she had been one of the ladies-in-waiting to the old Queen. The Rockingham children used to go to Lady Emberill’s also. Many a frolic did the boy Prince have with the little daughters of the Duchess at Lady Emberill’s—and many a time did they come to our apartments to feed our canaries—dear mother’s canaries they were then.”

“ I see.”

“ And so, too, with that portrait,” Miss Smith continued, closing the wire-door of the aviary and going towards the picture of the Prince. “ At the Palace, you know, a number

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of art-students attend in the picture galleries on certain days. Amongst these a young lady I knew used to come to tea at mother's: one day when the children were playing in our rooms, this girl-student made a sketch of the Prince. It was a clever sketch—full of life and expression. Mother admired it so much that the young artist made a finished portrait from it. Do you think it like? ”

“ A perfect likeness—the eyes especially. What is the painter's name? ”

“ Her name, my dear, was Viola Farmer, and she would have made it a great name by now, but a disaster happened——”

“ Oh, what was that? ”

“ She married, my dear,” replied Miss Smith, in a sepulchral tone.

“ Changed her name,” observed Miss Meakin with a giggle. “ A woman's marriage is very often nothing more than a change of name.”

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“ Changed it and took to baby-rearing. You can’t paint and rear babies. So her name is—is—I’ve forgotten what. But it’s not Viola Farmer.”

“ And you call marriage a disaster? ”

“ Old maids call marriage a disaster, my dear, but they dream of nothing else. Yes, I admit, I am always thinking of marriage—somebody’s marriage—that is, of marriage for somebody. Don’t you? ”

“ Well, to be candid, I suppose we women-kind do speculate about the subject a good deal. Marriage is a sort of mouse-trap, and we play around it, wondering whether we will go in and swallow the cheese, or stay hungering outside. But Viola Farmer—she went in, you say? ”

“ Yes. She got trapped—and disappeared. The other mice never quite know what happens to the one that gets caught, do they? Poor little Viola! ”

“ Well, at least she has painted one good

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portrait. I don't wonder you give it a place of honour."

"It is not because it is a good picture. The Gainsborough, of course, is a hundred times more valuable as a work of art. It hangs there because it is the Prince."

"Exactly. Well, you have shewn me your aviary, you have explained the Prince's portrait—satisfy my curiosity yet further. What are all these snippets stuck up here in this cosy corner? "

"Oh—a whim of mine. When I read something in the papers that strikes me particularly, or see a picture in the illustrated news that interests me more than usual, I just cut it out. Everyone does that I suppose. Well, if one cuts out snippets, they lie about, and when one tidies up they get buried away in a drawer, and one never sees them again. So what's the use of cutting them out at all? Now, my idea is to stick them up here in the cosy corner. So long

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as they interest one they remain, and their daily appearance before one's eyes fastens the facts concerning them into the mind. Thus they become remembered facts. As soon as they stale, one can paste something else over them. Do you see? "

" I do; and very inartistic they look, Effie—but what's this? "

" Ah that? That is a pedigree chart, or rather, a collection of genealogical truths concerning the Royal Families of Europe. I saw it in the ' Daily Chronicle ' a while ago, and just snipped it out. I've not stuck it up properly yet. But just look at it. Examine it; study it: and then tell me, do we want any more German blood in the English Royal Family?"

" My dear, you shock me! "

" So you said before; yet I have no wish to shock you, Alice. Only do look at the facts. The facts may shock you; they certainly do shock me. And they must shock the people of

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Great Britain, and the people in her Colonies and Dependencies. There are things that the World is blind to. But do not think the English people are asses. Do they not think for themselves? ”

“ How? What? ”

“ Do they not see the plain facts that are before their eyes? Do they not ask themselves the plain question that is crying in their ears?”

“ What question? ”

“ *The* question,” Miss Smith replied, looking her friend plump in the face. “ *The* question. The question that cries aloud for answer. Has not the time come for the Anglicization of the English Monarchy? ”

“ The Anglicization of the English Monarchy? ”

“ I said that,” Miss Smith repeated in her testy way. “ Has not the time come for the Anglicization of the English Monarchy? ”

CHAPTER V

THE ANGLICIZATION OF THE ENGLISH MONARCHY

ALICE MEAKIN repeated the question to herself as though she had a conundrum to puzzle over.

Miss Smith paused to let her ponder it.

“ I hope I am loyal,” Miss Smith proceeded. “ I know I am absolutely loyal to our good King George, and I sincerely pray for him and for all the members of the Royal Family. I love to sing, as we do now every Sunday morning, ‘ God save the King.’ How well it sounds in church! I sing at the top of my voice and with all my heart. Everybody does. But I believe the people of Great Britain, with all their unquestionable loyalty, are quietly long-

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ing, as I am also, to see a little good English blood infused into the veins of our Royal Family.”

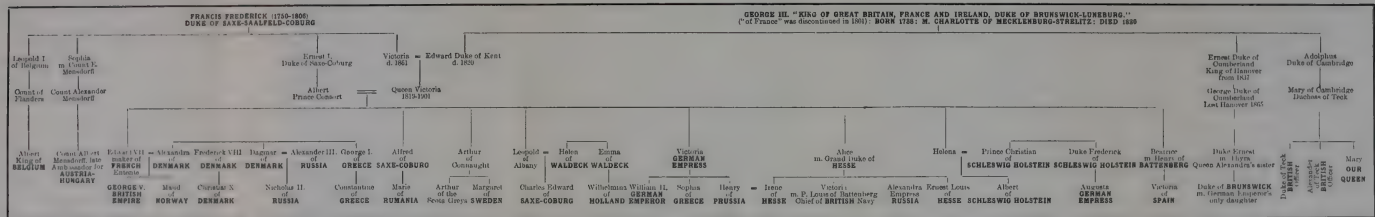
“ By marriage? ”

“ You did not suppose I meant it should be brought about by a surgical infusion. If you look at this chart on the wall here,” (Miss Smith rose and went with rustling skirts to the cosy corner where the snippets were stuck up), “ you will observe that it shows the descendants of George the Third, and of Francis Frederick of Saxe-Coburg. Most of them occupy European Thrones. Yes. From those two men nearly all the Kings and Queens in Europe trace their descent; they are very much intermarried and nearly related.”

“ So of course I see—and knew.”

“ They are all Germans—mainly German. I look upon George the Third as German, though he was King of England—and England has perhaps much to be grateful for in King

THE WAR AS A FAMILY AFFAIR: TABLE SHOWING HOW ROYAL FAMILIES OF EUROPE ARE SO CLOSELY INTERMARRIED AND RELATED THAT COMBATANTS AND NEUTRALS ARE ALL INVOLVED IN THE GREAT STRUGGLE.



IT is a commonplace that the present struggle is one of races and ruled rather than one of rulers. Certainly there is nothing comparable in it to the squabble over the Hohenzollern succession which precipitated the Franco-German War of

1870, on the other hand it must not be forgotten that owing to the extraordinary number of Royal intermarriages this war of races involves a war between their rulers. The average man has got a general idea of the close relationship between the Royal

families of Europe—they are "a' John Tamson's bairns"—but it will surprise most people to know how very close that Royal caste has become. Curiously enough, the family contributing most directly to the thrones of Europe is not Prussian, but

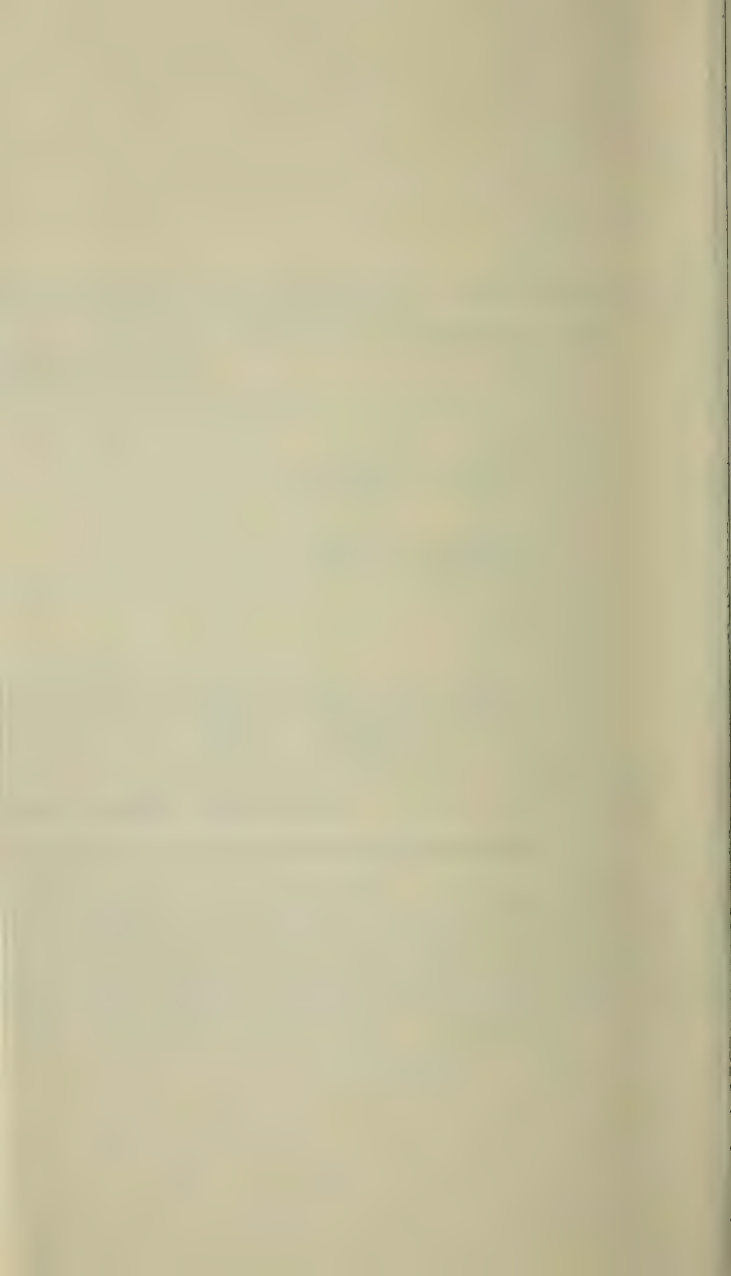
Saxon, for nearly every ruler on a throne in Europe at this time can trace to the Saxe-Coburg-Gotha branch of the German reigning houses. The accompanying table reduces to the utmost simplicity consonant with a quick

understanding the extraordinary conflict of interests by which the members of the reigning family find themselves confronted. There are, of course, a great many other relationships which might be shown, especially by a detailed account of the Saxe-Coburg family, but for English

readers the greatest interest lies in the descendants of George III. The table shows the descendants of George and Francis Frederick of Saxe-Coburg, who fill, or are going to fill, so many thrones in Europe. It has often been said that no quarrel

is so bitter as that between families; history may yet show that the present struggle, while involving far greater issues, may have been rendered acute by this family and dynastic fact which has certainly, in wars of another day, played such an enormous part.

From the "Daily Chronicle," Oct. 24, 1914.



ANGLICIZATION OF ENGLISH MONARCHY

George the Third—even although he lost us America.”

“ We could never have kept it, Effie—never.”

“ But for George the Third I think we could have done. I see no reason why the United States of America might not have been now just as much a part of the British Empire as Canada is—as Australia is, as New Zealand is. Under wiser management of the political troubles that arose a hundred years ago and more, England might have retained America. She—I mean America—would have had her own Government, of course, her own elected statesmen, her own home-made laws, her own unfettered freedom. She would have flourished none the less, but infinitely more in my humble judgment, had she remained loyal to the British Crown.”

“ But she could not. America was not to blame.”

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“ No: the insane German obstinacy of George the Third compelled her to assert her independence. But she might have been every whit as independent under the ægis of the British Crown. The sovereignty of England could only have continued if it was laid as lightly upon her as a mother’s kiss on the brow of her manliest and best-beloved son—the full-grown, prospering son of whose success and vigour a fond mother is proud. The link of that sovereignty, had it remained, would have meant incalculably much for Great Britain—incalculably more for America. But for the world it would have meant universal peace. However, that is by the way. It is merely one of innumerable thoughts that a glance at this chart suggests.”

“ It is a thought that is almost overwhelming. England and America, with Canada, Australia, and the rest of the British Empire, all its parts self-governed yet controlled from

one centre under the sceptre of one King, what a power in the world it would have been—what a resistless power! ”

“ And what a power it would have been for Peace—for world-wide Peace: always for Peace and Right, and for the integrity of smaller nations, for the Kingdom of God on Earth.”

The greatness of the idea was too much for Alice Meakin. It overwhelmed her. Her eyes lingered on the chart and her thoughts returned to the smaller subject of family and pedigree.

“ The relationship of the Royal Families of Europe is even more remarkable than I had realised—though there is nothing in the chart that gives new information,” Alice said.

“ It sets forth clearly a knowledge that we dimly possessed before. There are lots of things that we know of but don’t realise. The close relationship of our King and of the

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German Kaiser to each other and to the Czar was a fact everyone was familiar with. Everyone knew, too, in a general way that the thrones of Norway, Sweden, Denmark, Holland, Belgium, and Greece, were united by ties of the blood-relationship of their occupants. But we see it all at a glance on this clever chart. What strikes you most as you study it? ”

“ Well, Effie, what strikes me is this—what a wonderful family it is! ”

“ Yes, it is one family. You are right; it is a super-caste set up above all other families in Europe. And the German element is so astoundingly strong in it that they may fairly sing ‘ *Deutschland uber alles.* ’ Well, that is a song that I hope England will refuse to sing. ”

“ You mean——? ”

“ I mean, Alice, this: Royal marriages between the Princes of different nations used to be conceived, if I understand history, as in-

tended to promote and even to embody, the alliance of nations, but the universal prevalence of this one Family on nearly all the European thrones negatives the value of any and every Royal marriage as regards its influence upon the people of the various countries. It is difficult to express my meaning, perhaps, with loyalty: and loyal, I reiterate, I am and will be. But I am loyal to England as well as to my King, and I am none the less loyal to the King when I express my desire that the Princes of our Royal House will shut their hearts against any more German Alliances, and be done with them for ever, and that they will seek their future brides in the land where they reign, from the land where they are loved, from the daughters of Britain."

CHAPTER VI

TWO MINOR ROYALTIES

THE dusky curtains of night were but half drawn. Day was not yet. The slowly appearing November dawn was still veiled by white mists which hung over her face like lace.

All Nature was weirdly beautiful, changeful and dream-like. On either side of the road forest growths appeared: yet one could not discern how far they extended. There was no distant prospect in any direction. Yet all that was near was visible in the light that was itself veiled.

The bare trunks of the trees were moist and glistening. The boughs were covered with a

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million dew-drops as though hung with sparkling jewellery; they wept and their tears were gems. The frosted grass was half-hidden under a blanket of dank dark-brown sodden leaves. Every moment the curtains of mist were drawn wider, and the beauty of the mystery increased with the gradual awakening of morn.

Along the ringing road through the moist atmosphere ambled two equestrians; the lady in a dark riding habit, her companion in a light snuff-brown Norfolk jacket and corduroy breeches with smart tan boots. Their horses, well groomed and fed, were fresh and spirited.

As they rode the distances seemed to open with them as though they chased away the last vestiges of Night, as though the mists of Morning, too, gathering into long-drawn columns, slowly stretched into disappearing regiments and vanished beyond the serried trunks of newly visible trees. A glance above and the

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sky was a gentle tenderness of the palest blue, and low down towards the horizon, above a misty bank of vapour, the last lone star in heaven dimly flickered out.

They passed a few old red-brick cottages yellowed with lichen. Tall clumps of Michaelmas daisies, late though it was in November, still held a trace of floriferous purple, and made a loveliness of the neglected gardens.

"These people are not awake yet, cousin," said the horseman. "See, there is no smoke from the chimneys; we may know we are in England."

She laughed pleasantly, and, with a movement of her reins, brought her steed nearer to his. The rattle of their horses' hoofs and the jingle of the bit, made a merry morning music.

"When I get to Russia," he continued, "I shall find no peasants asleep at dawn."

"You are really going then?"

"And soon. My mission is an important

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one, none the less important because it is perhaps indefinite, none the less important because it is unauthorized; because it is not formally sanctioned."

"Enigmas. But I know your mission."

"Your highness guesses my mission—and your guesses, cousin, are always right. It is better to guess than to know. Intuition is better than knowledge. It gives more accurate results."

"Your mission is—the Prince's marriage," she said with a laugh, and she gave him an arch glance as she spoke.

"I admit nothing, cousin—nothing whatever."

"The times are in your favour. At least you will admit that. All diplomatists make some admissions."

"If I am compelled to admit anything, my admission is——" He paused and looked into her large blue eyes.

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“What?” she asked, turning those truly remarkable orbs fully upon him like two lanterns.

“That the times are very difficult.”

“Oh, surely the war is favourable to your plans. Now that Russia and England are such warm allies your project will prosper. The Prince, I am told, is shaping into a very good soldier. Mars was ever a favourite of Venus.”

They were minor Royalties, distantly related to each other, cousins far removed, yet each with a clear lineage that linked them by circumlocutory steps to most of the Sovereigns of Europe, including their Majesties of England, of Germany, and of Russia.

He was a very experienced, grey-headed man of the world, credited with a diplomatic quality that fitted him for the management of those intricate and delicate social affairs with which he was frequently entrusted; and the

Princess was disposed to draw his knowledge to slake the curiosity she felt.

“The marriage of the Prince,” she observed, carelessly, will receive much consideration at Windsor.”

He grew thoughtful, and cantering by her side without any reply, gazed at the pale sun breaking through the easterly sky.

She was not to be denied.

“You go to Russia with a definite proposition—it is to be presumed,” she remarked, smilingly, but she looked at him steadily, almost imperiously.

“If you think that I am entitled to make any proposition or that I am commissioned to broach any topic at all, let me disabuse your mind of any such idea. No, dear cousin, whatever may result from my journey to St. Petersburg or Tsarkoe Seloe, will be in consequence of my own initiative more than through any amiability of the Czar.”

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“You are credited,” said the Princess, paying him a nimble compliment, “you are credited by many of our mutual cousins in most of the Courts of Europe, with certain qualities, of a subtler character than is necessary even in the diplomatists of the various foreign embassies whose minds are centred on the devious perplexities of international politics.”

“My cousins flatter me,” he replied, brushing the wild ends of his grizzled moustache with his thumb and fingers. “My work is almost entirely confined to interests within the exclusive bounds of our illustrious Family. The most delicate considerations have to be weighed in the management of these social diplomacies. They touch the acute susceptibilities of our race in a singularly nervous manner. The minor Royalties in our Family are even more prone to evoke difficulties than those who occupy exalted thrones.”

TWO MINOR ROYALTIES

“But in Russia these will not trouble you,” she answered.

“Russia,” he replied, with a chuckle. “How you harp on Russia. You have credited me, my dear cousin, with a project to undertake a mission, which I have not acknowledged, and which I beg you to observe I do not admit, but were I engaged upon a task of so delicate a nature as you seem to suggest, any difficulty I met would probably not arise at the instance of any one occupying a throne. It would rather originate in the grandmother of some twentieth cousin, or in some one very remotely allied with a distant connexion of our House.”

“But you have a dexterous and skilful way even with grandmothers,” said her Royal Highness, a twinkling eye emphasizing her smile.

“In our family,” he answered, laughingly, and in its many branches, there are many grandmothers. Thank heaven!—the grand-

mothers are, some of them, delightfully young. If not, I would not be a social diplomatist, I would not be the Family Ambassador—for, after all, who really do pull the matrimonial strings but the grandmothers? ”

“ Ah! Now you have taught me something worth remembering, and straightway shall I ingratiate myself with all the grandmothers in Europe to whom I can trace a connexion. An eligible throne requires some finding at present, and when found, there are so many of us. The feminine element is especially redundant just now.”

“ There will be no difficulties in the path of the Belle of the Family,” he answered, raising his hat. “ The primitive qualities of mankind are very marked in our race, and the charm of beauty and bright wit appeal irresistibly to most of our Princes. I shall take you under my especial wing, dear Princess—if you will condescend to permit me—and indeed were I

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engaged in arranging the alliances you credit me with designing, I should be proud to elicit your confidences."

He looked with admiration as he spoke at her fair and flushed complexion, heightened by the brisk air and morning exercise. She lowered her large full eyes, and turned her head to hide the modest blush which had mounted in her cheeks.

"For without confidences," he resumed, "without these, I might waste my efforts in vain endeavour. We are not very distant relations, you and I."

She turned uneasily in her saddle and played nervously with her riding-whip. He was a keen observer and an adept at reading those trivial signs which betoken unuttered thoughts; those slight and nervous movements which innocence cannot conceal and which are more eloquent of truths unspoken than words.

His voice took on a tone of deeper serious-

ness. He could speak impressively when he would. He was a keen practitioner in the art of eliciting the secrets of the human heart. It gave him a power in the circle of his duty.

“Confidence is the test of all friendship,” he said quietly, “and between relations confidential conversation is the essential of all friendly intercourse.” He turned to look behind him. The grooms were not within ear-shot. “The rustle in the copse was only a squirrel,” he assured the Princess. Yet further to convince her their conversation would not be overheard, or at any rate understood by others than themselves, he ceased to speak in English and, proceeding now yet more intimately, spoke in German. “It is well to talk without reserve,” he said. “*Nicht wahr?* I can see in your eyes, though you lower them, the light of an earnest wish. Tell it me, and if I can, perchance I may assist you to realise it.”

TWO MINOR ROYALTIES

The Princess glanced quickly at her cousin and opened her lips to speak; but except an exclamation in German, no words came.

“*Grosse Seelen dulden still,*” he said encouragingly, flattering her. “This is a time of *Weltschmerz und Wahrheit und Dichtung.*”

“Let me—think a little,” she faltered. Then, as in correction of her hesitancy and weakness, she drew her whip across the flank of her horse. “Come, let us take a gallop,” she exclaimed lightly and in English, and shook her reins.

Her horse and his responded together; the road was through a long straight avenue of larch and pine, and they galloped for a mile, still riding fast though they had now come to a steep hill. At the summit she reined in and brought her steed to a halt, facing her cousin as she did so.

“Don’t go to Russia,” she said suddenly.

“Don’t go to Russia? Why not?”

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“Because—because you would be successful,” she replied. “I know how deftly you can pull the strings.”

“But that is the very reason I should go.”

She pointed with her whip. From the top of the hill there was now a clear prospect over the vale of Windsor—the winding Thames, the verdant playing fields and the picturesque buildings of Eton, the roofs of old Windsor Town, and beyond, the battlements and towers of the Castle.

Over the stately keep floated the silken folds of the Royal Standard, gorgeous in the morning breeze.

“Confidences beget confidences, cousin,” she said. “Your mission to Russia may possibly—remotely—some day in the future—end there . . . there.” Again she pointed with her whip.

“There,” he answered, as he too gazed at the Round Tower of Windsor. “Yes; it may

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be so. We cannot look far, with certainty, into the unknown. Anything may happen."

"The Prince of Wales is in France," she said. "Who can restrain the impetuosity of so brave a youth? Will not his impulse be to fight with his regiment, to share the dangers of the fighting line? What nobler destiny can be his than to die for England?"

"Nothing nobler. Yet let us pray that he may live for England."

"So we do both pray. But we cannot foretell the strokes of Destiny. Who shall say what the Future has in store for any of our Princes?—whether he, or it may be one of his brothers, may some day reign—nay, in these fateful days of *Sturm und Drang* who can tell what member of the Royal House may not eventually arrive in the succession?"

"My answer is, 'Long live the King.'"

"Long live the King!" she echoed. "Yet

the King himself, too, is going to the Front. On Sunday next he leaves for France."

"You are well-informed," he replied with a start. "How did you know?"

"From the same source that I knew you had a mission to Russia. From the same source that I knew for which of the Princes you seek a bride. But I appeal to you again. Do not—do not go."

She pressed him. She pleaded, placing her gloved fingers on his arm.

"Make some excuse. Postpone your mission, I beg of you."

"But why, dear cousin, why?"

The Princess turned away her head, and blushed. She was very beautiful.

"Think you I myself have no ambitions," she replied, with slow deliberation, her rapt eyes gazing intently on Windsor's Royal Tower. "*Nicht wahr?* Besides, I truly admire—*das heisst* I deeply regard—the Prince."

CHAPTER VII

A PRINCESS OF FRANCE

CARDINAL RENOUF inclined his ear with more than usual interest. A lady whose distinguished appearance owed nothing to her dress, for that was of the simplest, had supplicated his advice.

“I am aware that your Royal Highness has journeyed to Rome to receive the blessing of his Holiness,” the Cardinal said, in a voice bland and gentle. “I regret that after so much toil of travel your Royal Highness is disappointed for the time being in the object of so long a journey. I trust his Holiness will soon recover.”

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“ There are fears, Monsignor, that his illness may be prolonged.”

“ The latest medical report is very hopeful. Our holy Father is much disturbed in spirit. The sorrows of the war have preyed upon his mind, and he is in the deepest grief and affliction. Still we must trust his recovery may be speedy.”

“ So do we all pray, Monsignor. I have travelled far to ask his Holiness to intercede on my behalf.”

The Cardinal pricked up his ears; the confidences of distinguished people have ever been of the deepest interest to Ecclesiastics.

He inclined his head in a listening attitude, patient in his impatience. Experience had taught him that confession is best invited by the discretion of silence—not of questioning. He encouraged her with an ingratiating smile.

“ The heart? ” he ventured, with an accent of interrogation, and he tapped his bosom

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significantly, "the heart—its sorrows and cares—its pleasures—and its joys."

"I have no heart, Monsignor, for the world. I desire to make the Church my bridegroom. All my aspiration is to prayer, meditation and solitude."

"The sentiments you express do credit to your Royal Highness," the Cardinal suavely replied.

"Yet I am not encouraged by my spiritual advisers in these my holy aims. It would seem that they desire to prevent my devout aspirations," the Princess complained. "My desire in seeking an audience of his Holiness was to obtain his support. I have but one aim—to retire from the world. I am confident his Holiness will bless me with his sanction."

So this was all. The Cardinal closed his eyes and concealed a yawn. Then he asked: "Do you stay in Rome?"

"I am travelling incognito—with none but

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my lady and a maid. I have a courier. Yet there are many friends of our House in Rome—if I trouble them, I may.”

“Let me conduct your Highness to the Palazzo di Bresciani. There I can assure you a fitting welcome. The Count is in Palermo, but the Countess Moceniga would be proud to have the honour of receiving you. It is possible your Royal Highness may have to remain some time in the holy city; the illness of his Holiness may possibly be prolonged.”

“Your Eminence is more than kind. I am weary with travel. For a day or two at least nothing will be so congenial to my spirit as to stay at my apartments in the hotel which my courier has secured. It is situated in the Piazza di Spagna. When his Holiness is able to receive me he may probably communicate with me.”

The Pope had been a true friend to this lady, and by his counsel and comfort had

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engendered in her heart an unusual degree of affectionate veneration. But though he was willing to befriend the Catholic Princess of France, he was anxious also to avoid irritating the susceptibilities of the Republic. Many loyal French Republicans are Catholics, and by no official act, by no private deed, did the Pope show any public leanings towards the Royalists, which would provoke the animosity of the French President or any of his Ministers.

The Cardinal rose in the stately manner that was his own.

“I am sure his Holiness will do all in his power to further your Royal Highness’s pleasure. The griefs of Europe afflict him sorely. It would be his happiness to turn to lighter thoughts—to the joys of life and of youth such as cluster about the head of your Royal Highness.”

“Ah, but I have no heart, Monsignor, for the

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world. All my aspiration is to prayerful meditation and to retirement from all mundane affairs. I have no pleasure in them. I have sought an asylum from the world in the Convent of St. Anne at Maloo; but the Reverend Mother has not yet received me."

"All will be well, your Royal Highness," murmured the Cardinal, flicking a speck of dust from his sleeve.

"Then may I have your concurrence, Monsignor? May I assure the Reverend Mother that, having sought your counsel, I may at last take the veil?"

"Act not with precipitancy, my daughter. Let there be no haste about a step so irrevocable."

"Yet this have I long desired, Monsignor."

"To one whose position is so illustrious, time for consideration is the more necessary. His Holiness, as I well know, is your friend. Wait and be advised by him."

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“Willingly, Monsignor, for I am determined. But, indeed, I am sure the Holy Father will hear my prayer, though the Reverend Mother has persistently denied me.”

The Cardinal bowed his head and reflected. He contemplated his visitor with a frigid gaze. Obstinacy was written large upon her features; but obstinacy in women has never exceeded the obstinacy of the Ecclesiastic.

He was quick to perceive the situation and to recognize that his visitor was endeavouring through him to overcome the will of the Lady Superior of the Convent which she desired to enter against the advice in all probability of her spiritual advisers. He determined she should find no weakness in him. Yet he said softly:—

“I am not aware, my daughter, of the facts concerning your difficulties with the Lady Superior at St. Anne’s. Yet may it not be, Jeanne Marie, that the Church reserves for

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you a higher destiny than to renounce the world? ”

“ There can be no higher destiny, your Eminence. When I declare my desire for the renunciation of the world, it is but the negative mode of stating my desire for the adoption of a ceaseless devotion to the will of Heaven.”

Her imperious tone accorded not at all with her humble words.

“ Child, submit yourself to the will of the Church; that is the will of Heaven.”

“ For twenty-four hours I have not broken fast,” the Princess declared petulantly. “ The Reverend Mother prescribed this penance for me for every Friday of my journey. If it be the will of your Eminence that I endure further penance, I will be submissive, yet I know not on what account. I have now been craving persistently to enter the sanctuary, to be received into the sisterhood, to take the vows, and assume the veil. Every time I put for-

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ward my plea I am repelled. Your Eminence does not encourage me."

His Eminence cleared his throat, but otherwise was silent.

"At least tell me why, Monsignor."

"Let his Holiness be your adviser. *In magnis et voluisse sat est*. It may be that the Church reserves for you a higher destiny."

"A higher destiny than is reserved for erring mortals on earth in the retirement of the Convent, in the dedication of this life to mortification and poverty, I know not."

"There is no higher destiny for common mortals than to dedicate this mortal life entirely to Holy Church, but may there not be a higher destiny for your Royal Highness?"

"Ah, but Father—would I had words to express myself more clearly—I do not wish to be addressed in the words you have just used. I desire to be the lowliest of women; I desire to renounce my title to all earthly rank and

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honour, and to be even as the least amongst the poor and humble."

"Humility may sometimes mistake herself. Pride and obstinacy do often put on a humble garb. What says Ecclesiasticus? 'An obstinate heart shall be laden with sorrows.'"

The Princess checked an impatient gesture.

"I do not set any store by human wisdom. I lay claim to none. But as I have eyes and ears, so have I other senses; and with these my reason. I set not my human reason above things which are higher, nor above any authority to which it is my duty to bow. Yet I am not a dolt. I cannot help applying my ordinary senses to the interpretation of the common facts of life about me as they appear."

"Submit yourself, my daughter, to the will of the Church, and all will be well with you."

The Princess pursed up her lips and declared her mind with dogged obstinacy.

"I respect, I honour, and I most submis-

sively do bow to the authority of the Church, but can I be blind to the worldly ambition of those in the Church, misguided and uninspired, who are obviously endeavouring to sway my life for the accomplishment of their political ends? I say I am not blind or deaf, Monsignor. I respect authority whilst it remains holy authority. But when the Church panders to the world, as alas! all history shows it has done far too often——”

“Stay! Stay! This is flat blasphemy!”

“——and stoops to accomplish mundane ends by any and every means; when I ascertain that the Reverend Mother herself has designs upon me, because of the empty title which, barren though it is, they thrust upon me till I am nauseated with it, and seeks to make of me a tool for her worldly schemings and subtle plans, I say, my lord Cardinal, I will not be made a mannikin of. I will be no shuttlecock for political schemers.”

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“Since you have sought my counsel, Jeanne Marie, hear me. It is conceivable that the Church may find you can serve her best in the field of politics. Yes, daughter of France, it may be that this war will purge your nation of her Rationalism, and turn her towards the ancient Monarchy.”

“France is pleased to be Godless and Republican. I will not lift a finger, Monsignor, to re-establish the Monarchy. It has pleased God to overwhelm our family for a hundred years. Be it so. I bow to the will of God.”

The Cardinal concealed a smile under a frown. He admired firmness and courage, and, stroking his chin, fervently wished that this determined woman was a man—and that man King of France.

“I will take no part in any political plot,” the Princess declared defiantly. “I know enough of the dignitaries of the Church to know that what I say to your Eminence will

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reach the ears of the Reverend Mother of St Anne's. Let her know it, Monsignor."

"But what plot, my dear lady?"

"The plots in England in favour of our House."

"*Ben trovato*, Madam. I am assured of this: there is no politician in England who is making any endeavour to upset the *status quo* in France. No living Englishman of any weight whatever is scheming to restore the French Monarchy. I say that positively."

"How does your Eminence know?" the Princess asked, watching the Cardinal's face very narrowly.

"The Church of Rome knows everything," the Cardinal answered very solemnly, and he repeated the words three times.

"Besides," he added, more lightly, "the English do not plot and scheme to influence the affairs of foreign nations. That is not their way. I speak of present-day politics."

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“ But does your Eminence deny that there are Churchmen in England who scheme and plot? The Bishop of St. Edmund’s for one. Willingly would he use me as the tool of his meddling project.”

“ Ah! the Bishop of St. Edmund’s,” laughed the Cardinal gaily. “ Yes! He indeed. Your Highness has defeated me. You are quite right. He is a born conspirator.”

“ And Mrs. Herbert, of Annandale, Monsignor.”

“ Ah—ah! Mrs. Herbert. Yes, Mrs. Herbert of Annandale; there again is another. She is the truest friend of Rome in the whole realm of England. I concede you that, dear lady.”

“ She is the one Englishwoman of all others, your Eminence, for whom I have a truly affectionate regard.”

The Cardinal winced, and controlling his risible muscles with difficulty, remarked very drily :—

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“ I am delighted to hear it, my dear Princess. Delighted indeed. Be you advised by Mrs. Herbert of Annandale. Have you——? ”

He was interrupted by a ring on the telephone.

The Cardinal, excusing himself, applied his ear to the receiver, and soon looked very grave. He spoke a few sentences and rang off in some perturbation.

“ Your Royal Highness, are you able to receive serious news? ”

“ From the Vatican? ” she asked, with sudden intuition.

“ Yes. His Holiness is not expected to recover.”

For some solemn moments they sat in silence.

At length the Cardinal offered his arm, and without a word, conducted the Princess to her carriage—a hired vehicle from the hotel.

CHAPTER VIII

THE PRINCE

MISS SMITH and Lady Mary Vere had been very dear to each other. Perhaps the truest and most lasting friendships are those which arise in the unrestrained intimacies of childhood. Though Effie Smith was already a woman when Lady Mary was but a toddling infant, a very warm friendship had sprung up between them. Old Lady Emberill, delighted though she used to be when the Duchess and her two daughters visited her, was a little overcome sometimes by the frolics of "the two dear children," and then it was that it became convenient to let them run in to see Effie Smith's

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canaries, especially Mustard, Signor Caruso and Red Pepper.

So while the Duchess and Mrs. Smith were accustomed to remain with Lady Emberill, Effie would take the children into her aviary, or would amuse them with toys and games. Effie spent so many hours with her mother, and was so constantly her companion, that it was doubtless a relief to have the change of society which these visits involved, not only the children but their governess and maid spending hours with her on these occasions.

In those days Effie had only just blossomed into womanhood; her heart was juvenile, and she had a liking for children, the more so as she experienced ordinarily but little of the society of young people. All her life the Fates had so managed her small destinies that she had elderly people for her entourage.

It was natural that an acquaintanceship so begun should ripen during the intercourse of

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succeeding years. Now and again Mrs. Smith and Effie were invited for a few days to Rockingham, where they would have been overwhelmed by the stateliness of the great rooms and their awe of the Duke, but for the amiable graces of the Duchess and the modest simplicity and naturalness of her two growing daughters.

But Effie's particular chum on these visits was always Lady Mary. The two girls loved to have the other's undivided society, to get away into the woods together, to roam through the dark haunts of Rockingham Forest, and to go for long rides in the unfrequented Park, accompanied by Lady Mary's groom, who taught Effie how to jump without falling off.

Those were the days when she learned what joys the country life can bestow, for Lady Mary was as fond as she grew to be herself of snaring squirrels or of rambling with old Jakes the woodman with his ferrets after rabbits, and

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neither of them ever returned from the woods without huge sheaves of wild flowers.

So when Lady Mary Vere came for the first time to visit Miss Smith at Mead-Menham, they were thoroughly old friends. Yet they now met under new conditions, and in some respects they each felt they were making new acquaintance, for in the three years that had lapsed since they were last together many changes had occurred. Mrs. Smith's death and Effie's consequent removal from the old Palace Apartments, marked a change in Effie—put years on her age; and Lady Mary had ceased to be a child. But she was still full of the sweet innocencies of maidenhood; the woman within her was only awakening; even yet her graces were almost hoyden; her charms had not yet expanded into full flower; the frolic gaiety of childhood lingered still in the virginal wonderment of Dawn; she was woman enough to fill all the hours with chatter, but

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child enough still to make the whole house gay with her jokes and laughter.

“ Oh, that I were a man,” she exclaimed to Commander Smith, whom his sister had compelled to come on a flying visit to play host to the Prince. “ In these stirring times how hard it is not to be a man. To knit, to sew, to sing, to collect, to pray. How little our part is. Women must never dream again of asking for a vote. But for Heaven’s sake let us have some place where we can talk. When I think of those heroes in the trenches, when I think of you heroes on the sea—on it or under it—or at a moment’s notice blown into the sky—how I admire the fortitude, the patience, the indomitable pluck of the men—the soldiers and sailors—who are fighting for us on land or sea.”

“ We mustn’t spoil them with praise, Lady Mary,” the bluff Commander answered.

“ Can we spoil them? Look at the rain—

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the wind swaying the boughs yonder. My maid groused coming through a puddle yesterday in the car—and I grumbled myself worse than she did. Yet they—the heroes—over yonder in Flanders—and here, too, in England under canvas—poor things! the dear brave boys!—swamped out—half drowned in mud, with bronchitis, pneumonia—and not one word of murmuring. But I'll murmur—I'll shout! I'll scream! Scream I will. Why don't they billet the poor boys, at least till the log-huts are ready? Oh, must Governments always be stupid? Stupid—wicked!"

Tears of human sympathy streamed from her eyes, and she turned away to Effie half-ashamed.

"The Country has supported the Government through thick and thin; but it's time we rebelled."

"It is not for us to criticize," said Effie Smith. "Let us join with everybody else and

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not say a word against the Government unless something too glaring compels us. Fortunately we can always grumble at the weather. How it rains ! ”

“ Pours,” echoed Miss Meakin, going to the big bay window and flattening her rather ugly nose against the pane. “ Pours in torrents. I’m so sorry, Effie. The Prince will never come through this.”

“ The Prince having announced that he will honour me, will deem it his duty to be here,” Miss Smith answered confidently. “ A little rain will not deviate him. But I’m so glad I insisted on sending to Curnock’s to put up the awning.”

“ Can this be his motor ? ” Miss Meakin asked. “ It is about to stop. Yes ; it must be his.”

Commander Smith hastened to the gate and stood bareheaded in the rain, and a servant, who had been waiting, hurried forward with a large carriage umbrella.

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“ This is his tutor getting out—Mr. Finlayson. Ah! The Prince himself! ”

Miss Smith, ready and waiting to receive her distinguished guest, was greeted by him very cordially. The boy—he was no more—had all the ease and charm of manner that characterise his family. His modesty and simplicity always won golden opinions for him wherever he went, and now, as on other occasions, he gave pleasure to those who met him. He had that quickness of perception—the grace of Princes—which was so marked in his grandfather; he knew the name of the ship to which Commander Smith had recently been promoted. He asked Lady Mary Vere, whom he was surprised to see, though he betrayed no sign of it, whether Lady Morchester was still in Ireland, for he knew that the Earl had rejoined his regiment at Ypres, and he positively overwhelmed Miss Meakin, whom, of course, he had never before met, by giving her im-

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promptly an *apropos* anecdote about a second cousin of her own name, a master at Eton, with whom he had played cricket. The only one in the room who was at all glum was Miss Smith herself—for he had not yet said a word about her canaries.

Tea was served and still not a word of them. The evening paper was brought in and laid on a side table just as usual, and the Prince, eagerly and promptly enquiring for the latest telegram, Commander Smith read it to him. Then a long discussion followed on the position at Warsaw, Lodz, and Cracow, and then—then—in a breathless moment—Miss Smith, contending with her nervous anxiety, summoned her courage to ask the Prince if he would like to see the dear little birds.

“The dear little birds,” he repeated joyously, “Mustard, and Signor Caruso, and the rest of the songsters. Is Mustard still alive?”

“And sings, Sir. Yes,” cried Miss Smith in

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high delight. "Your Royal Highness remembers them then. You have not forgotten little Caruso." She clasped her hands and beamed; she was in the seventh heaven.

"Come," she said, holding up a beckoning finger to Lady Mary. "Not the others. Too many people at once frighten the birds."

She curtesied to the Prince to precede her, but holding the door open, he made way for her to take precedence. She led the way without ado, and flung open the door of her own room.

"My Snuggery!" she exclaimed happily. "Hampton Court is for me no more a home."

"But here you have a palace of your own," he replied, with a polite obeisance, and, content with this manifestation of propriety, he put his hands on a music-stool and leapt it as boys do at leap-frog.

Lady Mary merrily lifted a tango-leg over

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the same obstacle. "It's too tidy for a snugger," she exclaimed.

"Play in it then, you two children—for children you are still both—play as you used to do, and I shall feel more at home here myself ever after. This way—to the birds."

She pulled a curtain, and like the four-and-twenty blackbirds of the old rhyme, "the birds began to sing."

"Let me give them something as I used to do at your mother's, Miss Smith," the Prince pleaded.

"Run, Mary! Go and get a sponge-cake from the drawing-room; they like it better than sugar."

Lady Mary flitted away on her errand, light-footed as a sylph.

"Ah! That is the Signor!" cried the Prince, as a bird began to trill; "his song is as clear as ever. Caruso himself is eclipsed."

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What a concert all the birds create chorussing together."

"Aren't they sweet? There! Do you see that one on the top perch?"

"Not my old friend Cayenne Pepper——?"

"No. Poor Pepper gave up the ghost, Sir. That is quite a young bird. But isn't he lovely? Look at his yellow shoulders—and now listen—listen!"

"Quite a roller. But I don't see Mustard. What has become of him? He was my favourite, Miss Smith, if you remember."

"I remember, Sir. He used to hop on your finger when you were really a child. There! There! that is Mustard flying across the cage."

"Why, he's yellower than ever."

"Isn't he? Intense. Ah, Mary! the cake—thanks. Give it to his Royal Highness."

The Prince took it and placed a few crumbs on the wire of the cage, to which the birds flew eagerly. "Mustard! Mustard! Mustard doesn't come; he's forgotten me."

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“ Would you be so good as to hold up your finger, Sir—through the little door? ”

But the bird refused to be attracted, patient though the Prince was in his endeavours to allure him.

“ I should like to make him come to my finger,” he said; “ that would be like old times.”

“ If your Royal Highness were to go right into the aviary,” suggested Lady Mary.

Miss Smith gently opened the door—the Prince hesitating to enter, however, when Mustard flew from his perch to another. The Prince, balancing a crumb on his finger, stretched it out towards the bird through the open door.

At this the canary, with a saucy turn of his head, and a curious glance at the crumb, flew on to the back of the Prince’s hand, and then, in a moment—out of the aviary into the room.

Miss Smith hurriedly closed the door; the

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bird flying across the room on to the rigging of a ship's model which was on a high shelf.

Lady Mary rushed to the door of the room and locked it.

"Are all the windows closed?" asked the Prince anxiously.

"Fortunately, yes."

"I wonder if we can catch him."

Then a scramble began not unlike blind man's buff with the eyes open. All three of them crept stealthily towards the bird on tip-toe; off he flew to a picture-rail on the other side of the room. Then the Prince stood up on an easy chair and reached his hand very deftly towards the bird. But the canary was not to be caught so easily. Away it flew with a flirt of its yellow wing, this time towards Miss Smith, but turning again, flew once more to the picture-rail.

Now Lady Mary made her effort, standing on the chair and, climbing on the arm of it,

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nearly toppled over. The Prince caught her as she stumbled, all three laughing at the incident, like the boisterous grown-up children that they were. Finally the bird was caught in the lace curtains of the bay-window, all three assisting, and panting and blushing Lady Mary smoothed her untidy hair, as Miss Smith returned the roving canary to the aviary.

"I declare it has been quite an adventure," she said, fanning herself.

"Much better sport than shooting tame partridges," said the Prince. "Do you know why he flew out of his cage? Poor Mustard had no green food. He wants some groundsel."

"There's plenty of groundsel in the garden, Sir," Miss Smith replied. "If it didn't rain I'd get some."

"Oh, what matters a little rain? But it doesn't rain now, I think," the Prince observed, looking up at the sky, and turning the latch of

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the French window, he put his hands out in the air.

“No; it’s almost fine. Where is the groundsel?” asked Lady Mary.

“Oh, beyond the rosery and past the lavender. Through there beyond the kitchen garden. Don’t go out, Mary, it’s wet.”

“But the birds must have some groundsel, Euphemia Eliza,” she answered, stepping out on to the gravel. “His Royal Highness has asked for some.”

“Of course. Poor Mustard! We’ll make him happy if we can,” and the Prince followed Lady Mary.

Five minutes or more were they in the garden, but when they returned the young girl had a handful of the weed, and she and the Prince were gaily chattering.

Her face was wet with rain. Her colour was heightened by the excitement of her romp and by the strong wind. It was blowing half a gale

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outside. Her pretty hair was tossed about in wild tresses. Her dark hazel eyes were full of fun. Her sweet lips parted in a glad smile. She was full of English charm and youthful gaiety.

Miss Smith was not in the Snuggery when they re-entered it; they lingered a while talking and laughing, then they went through to the drawing-room.

Mr. Finlayson looked at his watch. "Will it be your Royal Highness's pleasure to keep your programme and return by the Chobham Road?" he enquired, rising.

"Yes, sir. But I shall come and see the canaries again," and he turned politely to Miss Smith. "May I? I have enjoyed my visit immensely. It's so pleasant to see old friends again. He looked admiringly at Lady Mary Vere.

"We were kids when I saw you last. Do you remember when I poked-in the eyes of

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your favourite doll, Lady Mary, and made them rattle inside the poor thing's head?"

She did remember, for she had boxed the boy's ears for doing it, and had been well punished by her governess for the crime.

Now she blushed at the remembrance of her peccadillo and drew herself up rather stiffly, as a grown-up woman should.

"We were children then," she answered, lowering her eyes modestly, for the Prince was looking at her very nearly, and she knew her cheeks were growing very pink.

"Lady Mary is only here till Monday, your Royal Highness," said Miss Smith.

"Oh! But I can't wait till Monday. I must look in the day after to-morrow to—to enquire whether your little bird has suffered from the effects of his escapade."

"My little bird will be very highly honoured," she replied with a curtesy, as she accompanied the Prince to the gate.

CHAPTER IX

THE CONCERT

THE mortal illness of the Pope brought the visit of the Princess Jeanne Marie to Rome to a conclusion. She retired to Florence: the death of the Pontiff followed. It was one of the early sorrows inflicted by the war.

Unable to return to Belgium, in which country she had spent some years of her exile, the French Princess sought refuge in England, which had become a land of mist and rain.

There were sunny intervals, however; although it was a time of flood and tempest, the record of sunshine was unusual for the time of the year. Motoring through the country was free from the annoyance of dust. Many

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distinguished refugees, both French and Belgian as well as many English people, found a new interest in motoring along the excellent roads, especially in the Southern counties, passing regiments of Territorials practising long route-marches, and visiting several of the camps at Salisbury, Aldershot, and elsewhere, taking comforts to poor wounded soldiers in hospital, and visiting their many friends who had enlisted.

The Princess Jeanne Marie of France, after a brief stay at Weybridge, became the guest of Mrs. Herbert of Annandale, and her occupation was of the same general nature. To visit the wounded, to comfort the bereaved, to offer kindness to prisoners, was an alleviation of her own sorrows. The death of the Pontiff was a deep grief to the Princess, for he had been her intimate personal friend.

Amongst others who found similar sympathetic employment brought about by the war,

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were Lady Mary Vere and her newly married sister. On several occasions these ladies, accompanied by the Duchess of Rockingham, were honoured with the company of the Prince. He had many a mission of duty which necessitated the use of his car. He and Mr. Finlayson scoured the country together on patriotic errands bent, and in these kindly tasks he found occasion sometimes to seek the co-operation of Lady Mary, a search, however, in which he was not always able to succeed.

Thus he met the Duchess one day—Lady Mary with her. He got out of his car and stood beside her's.

He was in khaki. He wanted Lady Mary to sing to some wounded convalescents in hospital.

“The Duke is following,” she said, looking behind her. “I think Mary is too young to sing in public.”

“But, your Grace—wounded soldiers.”

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“ I will come and sing to them myself,” the Duchess promised. “ I do not quite approve of it for Mary. So you are in khaki now.”

He blushed. The Prince was very juvenile.

She touched his elbow and turned him round. The Duchess had a laughing way with her.

“ It suits your Royal Highness,” she said with an approving nod. “ All you young men look well in khaki.”

“ The Prince of Wales has set us all an example,” he rejoined. “ He has chucked the 'Varsity. Can't even complete his last term; joined his regiment in France. He has been in the trenches already. Lucky chap! Wish I were out there too.”

“ Yes, the Prince of Wales is a model of what a young Prince should be. He has made of himself an example for every young man in England,” said the Duchess. “ Are you at Aldershot? ”

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"I drill there. I shoot at Bisley. Then Mr. Finlayson takes me on to Sandhurst."

"And when do you go to the front?"

"As soon as they think I am fit. I think I am good enough now. They don't." He stole a glance at Lady Mary.

She tried to look unconscious. It was not the first time she had felt the eyes of the Prince resting upon her.

He too felt rather sheepish, and turning from her stood a little awkwardly, first upon one leg and then the other, leaning upon the side of the car.

"I'll bring some jelly when I come over," the Duchess promised, "and how about a few birds?"

"Oh, a little game is always acceptable at an hospital, I believe. Here comes His Grace, surely."

Almost before the Duchess had time to turn round to look, the Duke's car ran beside her

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and stopped. Two gentlemen were in it, besides the Duke—one was a well-known Cabinet Minister—there is no need to mention his name—the other, Vandaleur.

The Duchess recounted what the Prince had asked for the wounded soldiers' concert. Lady Mary quivered nervously and turned towards the Prince.

“His Royal Highness wants Mary to go to Grimshot and sing to the wounded soldiers on Thursday. But I am going instead—and I am promising to take the poor fellows a few birds.”

“Then he'd better come and shoot 'em,” said the Duke with a laugh, turning to the Prince. “I've plenty of pheasants, your Royal Highness, but all my shooting friends are away in Flanders. My keepers, too, have all gone to the war—and even the poachers. The poachers, God bless 'em! have made the best soldiers of all.”

“Bravo!” cried the Prince, and stole

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another glance at Lady Mary. He thought she seemed pleased; she had told him lately she liked poachers.

“ If you’ll let us know when you’ll come and who you would like us to invite to meet your Royal Highness—the Duchess will be highly honoured.”

So it came about that this casual meeting at the Chobham Cross-roads brought the Prince to Rockingham.

But before that there was the Hospital Concert.

This proved a great success.

True the Duchess was unable to come, and duly made her excuses to the Prince, but Lily La Lys was there, and who could want anything more than Lily La Lys?

The concert was for the benefit and gratification of the wounded soldiers, and those who were convalescent had the front seats; but it was also to raise a fund for comforts, and all

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“ the best people ” in three counties took stalls. There was hardly any room for cheap seats except in the gallery.

The Prince entered the hall half-an-hour after the concert had begun, and sat through a few turns as in duty bound. His thoughts soon strayed from the singers; they were centred upon the lady whose mother had not been able to come; on the lady who was considered too young to sing; the lady who blushed when he looked at her; the lady who had tumbled off the arm of the big chair when they tried together to catch Miss Smith's escaped canary; the little Lady Mary Vere whom he first remembered in a pink frock with a pink-frocked doll, but who had grown now to be so tall, so arch, so coy, and so very, very charming.

Excepting for these reminiscences he would have been rather bored; but fortunately his chum, Goggsie, came, as had been agreed be-

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forehand, and sat in the special reserved chair next to him on his right; Mr. Finlayson occupied the left.

Goggsie, a larky youngster who had been in the Prince's set at Eton, whispered to him with a grin that "all the fun's behind," and tipped him a wink; whereupon, in "the interval" he followed Goggsie out, and so to the stage entrance.

The fun behind was of the mildest, and Goggsie supplied most of it himself. The performers, several of whom were amateurs, were engaged in putting on their make-up. It seemed to be *en regle* for every one of them to be engaged in smoking a cigarette. Some of the amateurs were humming to each other their parts. They were all very self-centred, especially the gentlemen, and most of them had an air of being, each of them, very much superior to anybody else; this especially amongst the ladies. Several of them carried pocket mirrors

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in which they minutely studied their personal appearance, before doing so again in a more general way in the large mirror that stood over a somewhat dilapidated mantel-piece. There were one or two plain black bottles which had contained whisky, and one or two more which still did. There were soda-syphons full and empty, and glasses.

A paucity of chairs was noticeable in this little back room, so it was natural that the artists should sit on tables swinging their legs. Upon one of these sat a funny old gentleman, very wrinkled, playing a Jew's harp, an instrument chosen because it couldn't be heard "in front," whilst a lady and gentleman were dreamily dancing an impromptu tango to the tune.

Amongst all these, the happiest was Goggsie. He was truly funny. He was full of the gay, exuberant spirit of youth, and he simply let it go. He made every face wear a smile. He

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wasn't clever; he didn't say anything brilliant; he didn't try to do anything; but he was delightfully filled with folly, and he continually emptied it on all and sundry.

His proper name was Cholmondeley. How it became "Goggsie" nobody knew, nor does it matter. He was full of money at times—and alternately "broke to the world" as he phrased it. He had a ready wit and babbled. But it was not the kind of wit that can be chronicled. His words were bubbles; they could not be set forth. He trifled, and everyone laughed. He walked on a long plank that stretched from table to table, preferring it to the floor. He turned head over heels and walked about on his hands; he lit matches with his teeth. In a word, he tried to make a fool of himself—and succeeded.

The Prince and he were great chums, and always had been since they first met. Everyone liked Goggsie. He was full of plain,

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wholesome, English good-nature. He had an unusual share of the magic effervescence of Youth. He was a careless, merry good-for-nothing.

“ A good-for-nothing.” How often the idle words are said! A good-for-nothing.

But a few months afterwards he was with a company of dragoons in a tight corner, and it was his action, his pluck, his initiative, his fighting, writhing, brave, wounded body that grimly held the line and saved not his own company alone but the whole regiment. This comment by the way.

The Prince, quietly observant, took in all that was to be seen, but he was attracted by a serious-faced, dull-looking woman seated on a cane-bottomed chair. She was quietly inhaling a cigarette, and looked infinitely bored. She had small dark eyes, but they were very bright. He found her, to his surprise, very interesting. She was Mademoiselle Lily La

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Lys; though so dull-looking in repose, her face lit up wonderfully in conversation. She talked French in a very sprightly way, with the accent of the Luxembourg—interlarded with the latest Parisian slang. But she confided to the Prince that she was really half Portuguese. Of whatever country she was, she was full of anecdote and sparkle.

She was an effusive, sprightly, mercurial creature. It was amusing to listen to her, but after a while Lily La Lys sent the Prince to his seat in front, for her own turn was to follow soon, and he had been waiting for this.

“ You mustn’t miss *me* for anything, *mon gars*; there’s nobody else,” she said, quite composedly.

Everyone had long known La Lys—except the Prince, who was too young to know many singers yet. But La Lys had been about—oh, for years and years and years.

Her entrance was like a pop—and then out

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fizzed the foam. What little dress she had was very smart and *chic*. Her lace petticoats ended above her knees. Even her legs were full of expression; but it was her trick of hands, her wonderful, rather ugly face, her *espièglerie*, her *moquerie*, her *diablerie*—these were her secret.

And her voice! It was musical, of wide compass, highly trained, yet with a raucous note sometimes that defied Art, or rather defied Music—for there was in truth powerful artistry in her use of this jarring note, artistry not of the musician but of the *comédienne*.

And her exit——!

The programme only billed her for one song. But this invariably involved a treble encore.

When she had finished singing, the Prince thought he had never heard anything like her in his life.

Indeed, nobody ever had. That was La Lys.

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After her there was nothing but an amateur tenor, in whose honour people rose to put on their coats and wraps. The Prince, however, sat through his song.

As the Prince rose the National Anthem struck up. Hats came off again, and the audience stood to sing it vociferously. It has been a general custom during the War to have the whole anthem, and not a mere bar. When it was ended, the Prince, in passing out, spoke to several of the wounded soldiers. They were men whom he often saw, and the entertainment ended with loud cheers.

The Hall began to clear. There had been a fashionable audience, and a great many motors were waiting outside. The Prince, who detested being stared at by a mob, had directed his motor to be in waiting up a quiet side street. This happened to lead to the stage-entrance. Here a few professional singers and entertainers were crowding into a

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motor that they had chartered to run them to the village railway station—if the trains served—or if not to Slough Junction, whence there was a better service to London. Goggsie, careless of precedence, led the way into the Prince's car. Mr. Finlayson stood for the Prince to enter, but at that moment the professionals began to squabble. Their two cars were right opposite the stage door, feebly lit by one flickering gas lamp. The Prince's car was, by design and intention, in the darkness of the narrow little lane. A few other cars, belonging to the friends of amateurs, were further down the lane—a *cul de sac*.

Always observant, the Prince noticed what was happening; he stood with his overcoat on, a pipe in his mouth, and a crook-handled stick hooked over his arm.

Lily La Lys, behatted and in a huge fashionable military cloak, stood at the stage-door alone. The cars were already occupied and

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overcrowded; there was no room for La Lys. There were no cabs, and she probably had to catch a train.

The Prince, looking at the actress, raised his hat with the politeness which, with the English Princes, is innate, and whispered to Mr. Finlayson, who was thus compelled to take the Prince's message—though he did it with obvious reluctance.

It became Mr. Finlayson's turn to raise his hat to La Lys; he did so with less grace.

“ His Royal Highness requests that he may be allowed to place his car at your service, Mademoiselle—if you are going to the station.”

She had seen herself ousted with nonchalance; with equal nonchalance she stepped briskly into the Prince's car. This did not pass unobserved. Colonel Dorsdale—whose daughter had been singing—seeing that the Prince's car was now overcrowded, came forward, and, bareheaded before the Prince—to

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whom only he looked—offered a seat in his own car to Goggsie—who promptly accepted it—for Finlayson. In this the Prince smilingly acquiesced. Goggsie jumped out of his seat to sit next the Prince, whose hands were on the wheel; he always drove his own car.

“ Off! ” cried Goggsie, unceremoniously, “ and drive like the devil.”

The chauffeur jumped in behind, and thus had the seat with La Lys. In two minutes they were out of the village scurrying through the wild night.

“ I’m glad we’ve got rid of old Finlayson,” Goggsie said to the Prince with a laugh.

“ Why? ”

“ He’s such a wet blanket.”

“ Well. That’s his job, rather, isn’t it? And my handicap? ”

“ And to-night we’re in for a spree.”

“ How? ”

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“ I’m in the chair. You leave it to me. Nobody has been paid a single sixpence to-night, you know. It’s been a real charity concert all through.” There was an apologetic note in his voice. “ It’s time we had some fun.”

He flung himself round, and kneeling on the seat, leant over to chatter for a minute with Mademoiselle La Lys. He resumed his seat, his merry face twinkling.

“ You’re up to a lark,” cried the Prince, laughing, “ I can see it in your eyes.”

“ I am: I had a plant on, and now La Lys’s in it too. So they’ve all accepted. They were jolly hungry—all the lot—and it’s been deadly dull of late, hasn’t it? I’ve ordered supper at the Red Lion. But I didn’t know we were going to have the luck to hook you in too,” and he looked hard at the Prince. “ But now that we’ve squeezed out old Finlayson—what? Perhaps we may get you, eh? ”

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“ Take supper with you? Is that the suggestion? ”

“ Yes. They can do you jolly well at the Red Lion.”

“ Why not, Goggsie? I shall be charmed, I’m sure.”

CHAPTER X

LILY LA LYS

It proved to be a very merry supper party, as impromptu affairs often are. An odour of stale tobacco smoke pervaded the atmosphere as they entered the room, but as most of the guests smoked cigarettes throughout the entire meal, this was soon lost—or ignored.

There were oysters au naturel and scoloped, Lincoln pie, angels-on-horseback, buck-rabbit, and devilled bones. Chablis and champagne flowed very freely, for Goggsie was a lavish host.

“What they won’t drink pour over ’em,” was his laughing order to the dignified head-waiter. The white-whiskered old man turned

up his eyes to the ceiling in mute appeal; he deprecated such levity.

Laughter and good appetite are better than sauce. Jests and jokes flitted gaily across the table, and altogether there was a great deal of hilarity. But the excellent hunger of the ladies and gentlemen present even exceeded their good spirits, though they were all bubbling with joy.

There was a droll fellow with a thin, be-wrinkled face—the Jew's-harp man—who knew how to tell an anecdote. He was as full of them as a monkey's pouch of nuts on a Bank Holiday at the Zoo, and they fell out upon the company one after another, like walnuts from a shaken tree—like chestnuts, one might perhaps better say.

After each quip he would raise his glass and await a friendly lead for another sally.

There were now signs of repletion.

The guests pledged each other and all the

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world—except Germany. The room rang with loyal toasts. The tenor tried to make a graceful speech, but was noisily suppressed and had to sit down undelivered.

The party mainly consisted of professional singers, but Goggie, who was in the host's chair—a very large one—called upon an amateur for a song. He poked a little sly fun at her. He didn't know whether it was proper to call on her as a lady-amateur, or an amateur-lady, but perhaps her song would prove. She was a silver-medallist of the Royal Academy of Music, and her voice was of better quality and was also better trained than the vocal organs of most of the professionals present, but though she sang with taste and ability she left the audience a little cold. The Prince suggested to his host that he should put up a comedian, an artist whose two songs at the concert had been very favourably received. He gave them a taste of what was wanted, and when he subsided there was an uproar.

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Several other singers followed. Whether it was the influence of the champagne, the art of the performer, or the spirit of gaiety that was in the air, whoever sung the singing went well, and the Prince enjoyed it immensely.

When the fun was at its height Lily La Lys was called upon; Goggsie had been reserving her for a *bonne bouche*. She sang a pretty little French *chansonette*. It was so simple and innocent that coming from her it was received with ironical raillery. Yet the Prince liked it better than anything he had heard the whole evening.

She followed with a *risque* thing, one of her most famous songs; the song, indeed, which had made her famous, and of the *bizarre* quality with which her name was ever after identified. It was crammed with *double ententes*, with light satire, with exuberant folly. The table rang with laughter and applause. An *encore* was demanded. Her mocking face was adamant.

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Still the demand rang—still she refused, until the Prince, himself rising with a request, prevailed.

She made a little characteristic *moue*, and this time spoke a few words in an undertone to the man with the wrinkled face—he who had fooled with the Jew's-harp—the *raconteur*. He was in fact a violinist, and though he had brought his instrument he had not been called upon for it during the whole evening, either at the concert or the supper. Now it was produced—out of a very worn old case—and he stood by the pianist, tuning his yet older fiddle.

He played a few solemn bars. The music was by the Russian composer Stravinsky. It was exalted, ethereal.

Music, the finest medium of the soul's expression, responds to the genius of every epoch. This spirit-moving minstrelsy was a sigh, a moan, a sob, a triumph of awakening Russia. None but a Russian of this wondrous day could

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have composed it. Could it be sung by La Lys?

But for the sobering, strenuous, soul-stirring influence of these great days of War, it could not. But in this impulsive woman, in this frivolous Portuguese cosmopolite, there pulsed the throbbing heart of stricken France—of France fighting for her life abreast with Britain, her true Ally, and the spirit of the times swayed her emotions and wrought a glory in her soul. The artiste in her was conquered, compelled by patriotism; the deep under-current that flows beneath every waking hour of our present immortal life supported her, as it supports us all, carried her buoyant being on a wave of exaltation, and lifted her to heights beyond and above herself. Her voice thrilled with intensity, with inspiration, with rapture.

Before she began the song, the Prince had gazed upon her wondering. Her plain, rather ugly face always awoke when she sang, and

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became lit with vivid intelligence. So it was during her first song, so was it touched with a *diablerie* all her own in the second. But now as her soaring notes aspired, her face became softened. The soul's light illumined her mobile features. The artiste vanished. She had become the glorified apostle of Vengeance, of inexorable Justice, of ultimate Mercy, of Righteous War.

When she ended there was a silence—even there—even then. Hearts and souls were touched too deeply to allow applause.

There were no more songs. For a while the stillness was almost weird. Whispers and murmurs eventually dispelled the almost uncanny silence. Then there was more champagne, and later yet more and still noisier hilarity. Goggsie, who had been setting an hospitable example to his guests, discovered the need of coffee. "Very black," he commanded, "and liqueurs." Two or three of

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one party quietly crept away, whilst the rest of the table were entranced by a very humorous story. During the applause that followed the Prince felt a distinct pressure on his toe. He moved his foot, but soon afterwards it came again—a gentle but sustained pressure. He looked across at his vis-a-vis. Lily La Lys smiled curiously, and rose from the table. The Prince rose also. Everyone did—except their host, who had fallen asleep.

The Prince had enjoyed his unusual evening thoroughly, but he realised it was time to go. He paid polite compliments to two or three of the singers, shook hands with many of them, and got into his gloves and furs. His glance rested on Goggsie—his school-chum. He wished now for the presence of his right hand, Mr. Finlayson, whom he had sent off from the Concert Hall with Colonel Dorsdale. However, he managed without him by sending an order to his chauffeur to put Goggsie in a taxi and see him safely to his home.

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Word was then brought to the Prince that his car was ready, and he was about to get in when he felt a gentle pressure on his left shoulder—from La Lys, who was now at the door, cloaked and behatted and in waiting. As he entered his car he raised his hat to her with a good-bye. He had been amused by her at the concert, he had “given her a lift” in his car, he had been immensely indebted to her singing, and now he wished her a cordial farewell, her hand lingering the while in his.

He still felt her hand in his palm after he had withdrawn from her and was seated in his car. Then he started, but somehow La Lys was in the car, and next to his—the driver’s—seat.

“You’ll whisk me to my train—won’t you? You pass my station at Slough.”

The Prince could do no other. He was “most delighted” he said.

He was unaccustomed to such liberties, but not displeased. The free way of all these

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people and of La Lys amongst them was quite a delightful though new experience. To a man who suffered from an excess of ceremony, the absence of formality, the naturalness of these Bohemian creatures, was most refreshing. He felt like a caged bird let out into the joyous freedom of the woodlands. He felt how the lilting happinesses of life were denied to him.

Throughout the supper Mademoiselle La Lys had been rather quiet. She had sung her songs and so contributed to the pleasure of them all, but otherwise her mind had been unexpressed. Even now that she was alone with him in the car she said nothing, though he felt her so near him.

To the juvenile Prince came a new experience. At every turn of the road the contiguity of this feminine being became imperceptibly closer.

It is but a step from boyhood to manhood, from immaturity to adolescence.

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One stroke of the scythe of Time had mown down his callow juniority. In the absence of Mr. Finlayson he felt himself no longer *in statu pupillari*. He was at the entrance of another epoch.

An agreeable sense of contact with some new and other world obsessed him, and in the silence the refrain of La Lys's wonderful song was a vibrating echo in his ears.

It was a clear moonlight night. The air was sweet and fresh. Earlier there had been a good deal of wind, but this had now subsided.

The car was soon out of the village and travelled quickly along a dark highway bordered by tall hedges and leafless trees. The road turned up a hill, and they glided through a land of gorse and bracken. Now and then a clump of brambles seemed to bound towards them and flit by, or a few shivering birches approached them ominously near, and were weirdly gone. Smoothly and noiselessly the

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easy-running car stole through moonlit glades; they might have been in a realm of dreams, of pale breadths of subdued light, of unsubstantial shadows.

In the distance the picturesque clump of sombre pines that form a landmark on Chobham Common, reared darkly in the solitude. Away to the left was a wide expanse of shimmering leafage; to the right impending banks of bramble-covered sand, and away, away the gloomy horizon and the mysterious sky.

Neither of them had spoken for some miles. Except a few khaki-clad sentries no one had they passed or met. The loneliness was impressive.

The Prince felt the hand of his companion as she laid it gently upon his.

“ Stay,” she murmured. “ It is so lovely, so beautiful—all this silver world.”

She stretched out *à bras ouverts* widely, as though she would embrace the whole universe.

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The Prince slowed down and then stopped the car.

“ It entrances me,” she said, “ the scent of night, the aroma of the pines, the stillness, afar the darkness against the wan light of heaven, and around us this sea of silver leaves.”

“ Truly it is like a dream,” the Prince replied, entering into her own feeling of oneness with nature, the poet’s eternal rapture, some symptom of which lurks in us all.

They sat there awhile in the stillness, neither speaking. Her arm imperceptibly slithered round his, with the gentle undulating movement of a snake. Her fingers stole again into his palm. He felt the warmth of her hand as it lay in his within the amplitude of his motorist’s glove. Her nestling form throbbed upon his breast. He could feel a movement he had never before known, a perturbation, an excitement, perhaps an awakening, and on his lips the moist warmth of a kiss.

CHAPTER XI

THE DUKE OF ROCKINGHAM

THREE weeks after the concert at Grimshot the Prince and Mr. Orlando Cholmondeley, familiarly known as "Goggsie," came to Rockingham together. The Prince was attended by Mr. Finlayson, and there was a small house-party, but altogether there were only ten or twelve guns. However, except that the pheasants were rather too tame, the sport was good and they bagged plenty of birds.

The house-party was very limited, and lasted only a few days, for the Prince was keen on his work and had to stick to his drill at Aldershot. He had not asked for anyone to meet him, except Cholmondeley. Still, the Duchess had

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picked out a few people she thought he would like, and who would keep him amused; two or three agreeable men and some nice girls. But the War kept the Duke very busy, and as he had to be in town every day on Government business, though he was not on the Ministerial side, he could hardly fulfil his duties as host. Under the circumstances, however, he had no hesitation in excusing himself, and the Prince was most kind and forbearing. The War excuses everything.

Perhaps the smaller the party the more the fun, despite the proverb to the contrary. This at least was certain, the Prince enjoyed his visit. The sport was plentiful, his companions were good shots, as also was the Duke—though his Grace could only be present at one shoot. They had golf in the afternoon on the home links, and the evenings were merry. How could they be otherwise when Goggie was there?

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“ Cholmondeley doesn’t care for golf,” the Prince told the Duchess. “ But we’ll play all the same. I dare say we can make up a four-some? ”

“ Mary adores golf,” she answered, “ and so do most of the others. But she’s not to shoot; I won’t let her. It’s not good for the child.”

Mary pulled a naughty face behind her mother’s back, and the Prince smiled.

“ Anyway, she can join the guns at luncheon,” was his comment. “ We’re to lunch at the Manor Farm—so I’m promised. And then to the links. What? ”

“ Yes, yes, and Effie will walk there with me, won’t you, Euphemia Eliza? ” said Lady Mary, and she turned to Miss Smith, who was one of the house-party. “ You bring Oto.”

“ Oto would be a sporting-dog if he were yours, Mary,” Miss Smith replied. “ But as he’s mine he gets little chance.” She stroked

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his beautiful dark-red coat as she spoke, and Oto, very proud of himself, stood on his hind-legs, wagging his tail.

“ I believe he’d retrieve,” said the Prince, looking at the dog with interest. “ Shall we teach him to? We could, I’m sure. He’s so intelligent.”

“ These Chinese dogs are supposed not to be sportsmen, your Royal Highness.”

“ I know he’s a Chinaman. But that’s no reason why we shouldn’t make a sportsman of him. May we have him to-morrow with the guns? We sally out early, before breakfast—at seven.”

“ Mary shall bring him,” said Miss Smith, a thoughtful expression glooming over her face. “ Yes, Oto would follow Mary.”

And the Prince followed Mary too. For she did go with the guns, in spite of her mother. Then they had golf in the afternoon, and billiards in the evening. No wonder they all slept well at Rockingham.

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When the Prince's visit came to a close, he reminded the Duchess that some birds were to be sent to Grimshot hospital. "You didn't come to the concert as you promised you would," he said reproachfully.

"I was to sing," she answered. "Yes. But when I saw the programme, I thought there would be no need for me."

A remembrance of Mademoiselle La Lys came to him. He brushed his lips with a nervous finger; his fair soft complexion was suffused with a blush, and he looked shyly, perhaps guiltily, at his hostess.

"And you asked Mary," said the Duchess in an accent of reproof.

"I—er—Your Grace, I didn't know," he stammered. "I hadn't seen the programme. I had never seen, never heard of Mademoiselle Lily La Lys."

He took out his handkerchief and wiped his lips.

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For days, for nights, she had haunted him. The memory of this woman had hung in his mind constantly. Even now a clammy heat lingered in his palm as though her presence would not leave him. A sense of her personality inhabited him.

“ She sang wonderfully,” he admitted to the Duchess. “ In justice to her I must say it. She was entrancing.”

“ Entrancing! Bewitching! There are always witches for men like you.”

“ For all men,” he answered gravely, his eyes staring.

Lady Mary came tripping towards them.

In her hand was a prayer-book with a golden cross on the cover. He knew she had been to Holy Communion, for it was a Saint's day, and her habitual devotion was known to him.

Her face shone with the calm beauty of innocence, that pure, simple, English face ever wreathed with a sweet smile.

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She wore a golfing-jacket, and under her arm was a pair of clubs. She was going, no doubt, for a walk round the links—after he had gone. And still, as the Duchess observed, his eyes were intent upon her.

As also were his thoughts. Because, if there were witches amongst women, was there not here in Lady Mary—the antidote?

Cholmondeley came out on to the steps; the motor was ready to take them away. Lady Mary, lightly throwing up and catching her golf ball, stood beside her father, who was waiting rather ceremoniously to see the Prince off.

“Just one shot before you go,” said Lady Mary, with an arch look at the Prince, and, slipping her prayer-book into her mother’s hand, she walked to the edge of the terrace, and stooped to make a tee.

She did it so quickly that the Prince’s polite aid was useless. She offered her driver to him.

“You first,” he answered, bowing.

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She set her ball and took up her club to drive.

The Prince watched her—her supple lissom figure, as it swung when she made her drive, as she raised her hand to her eyes to follow the flying ball.

“ Now, beat that,” she said, defiantly, as she handed him her club.

Her drive had been such a good one that there was no need to make a gallant excuse. He doubted if he could equal so good a shot. He would have to do his best to be anywhere near her.

But his best was done so well that it was a question which of them had driven furthest. She was so keen to know that he had to speed quickly after her, down the central walk of the Terrace Garden to a distant lawn.

They found it to be so near a thing that to decide priority would need measurement, and as time pressed a decision was waived. They sauntered back towards the car, laughing and

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chattering, meeting the Duchess and Mr. Cholmondeley on their return and going back with them.

“ May I come over and play Lady Mary a game one day next week? ” he asked her Grace as he took the wheel. The Duchess noticed that even though he spoke to her, his eyes were on her daughter.

So her affirmative was with a smile.

“ Whenever it is agreeable to your Royal Highness,” added the Duke cheerily. “ Besides, next week I shall have leisure to show you more courtesy—and we’ll shoot over the home coverts together.”

So the Prince visited Rockingham again.

But after he left some trouble must have arisen.

* * * * *

The Duke was much disturbed. He took off his spectacles and laid them down solemnly on the cover of a Parliamentary blue-book.

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“ The thing must be stopped, Lavinia,” he said to his Duchess, very gravely.

“ But why, Archibald? ”

“ It’s preposterous.”

“ How so, pray? He says he’s very fond of Mary. And indeed I am very sure he loves her.”

“ Loves! ” cried the Duke, taking up his spectacles again with shaking fingers and tossing away a letter in an agitated manner. “ My dear Lavinia, you shock me.”

“ Then there must be something in your Grace’s mind that I fail to appreciate.”

“ Let us look at this calmly,” said the Duke, rising from his chair and leaning his head upon his hand, whilst he rested his elbow on a corner of the great sculptured chimney-piece. “ Calmly—if that be possible.”

It seemed to the Duchess possible enough, for she quietly proceeded with her knitting.

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“ —Calmly and reasonably, if such folly can be so faced.”

“ I fail to see any folly in it. I think it would be a brilliant match for our daughter, and I am at a loss to appreciate your opposition to it.”

The Duke sighed audibly. “ We have no desire in our family for brilliant matches, Lavinia,” he said, stiffly. “ We have no need of any.” He lifted his neck proudly and tugged at his collar.

“ The Prince has plainly expressed his hopes and wishes. By so doing, and yet more by his conduct, he has declared his affection. Mary undoubtedly reciprocates it. They were always fond of each other as children—though I never thought their harmless boy and girl play would culminate in this.”

“ But now your Grace sees what it has led to.”

“ It may lead—eventually and in quite pos-

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sible though remote contingencies—to our daughter becoming some day the Queen of England.” So saying the Duchess put aside her knitting and looked triumphantly at her lord.

“ It can never come to that, Lavinia.”

“ And pray why not, my lord? ”

“ Mary! Queen of England! What on earth are you dreaming of? ”

“ If the Prince were to marry our daughter she would, as his Consort, be the Queen—if the Prince ever becomes King.”

“ My dear Lavinia! If—if—— ”

“ But darling! He may succeed some day.”

“ Preposterous! ”

“ We never know what the future has in store, my lord.”

“ The future! ”

“ It is unlikely—most improbable. But there is a possibility.”

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“ Eh? Well—possibly: yes. It is remotely—following your thought—it is, as you say, remotely possible that the Prince might some day become King. But I hope it’s not so bad as that.”

“ Really, Archibald, do explain yourself.”

“ My dear wife—the scandal of it.”

“ Scandal—your Grace! ”

“ The scandal! The publicity! The glare of the public eye upon us, upon Mary; the comments of the Press. I shouldn’t wonder if those damned journalists haven’t got hold of it already.”

He crossed the room and took up “ The Times,” hurriedly turning over its pages and searching their columns in continued agitation.

“ Is there something I do not know, dear Archie? ” asked the Duchess, going towards him and putting her hand affectionately upon his shoulder, as she studied his face with some degree of concern. And with a measure

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of agitation in her voice that his manner had communicated to her, she added pleadingly: “ Do confide in me fully, Archibald. What is it you withhold from me? ”

“ You, Lavinia? You, who are usually so quick-witted. Do you not see how erratic this is—how irregular? ”

“ The conventionalities perhaps have not been so punctiliously observed as one might desire, and yet in what respect have they not been followed? Nothing has been really done—as yet. There is ample time to follow the usual etiquette.”

“ It is not to be thought of. It is quite impossible.”

The Duchess looked at her lord. She be-thought her that he was always a little slow, though as she regarded him with her benign and placid eyes it occurred to her he might have some vexation that was troubling him relating probably to national affairs. He was chairman

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of many committees, and had heavy responsibilities concerning several business matters connected with the War. She drew a stray, unravelled thread from her morning blouse and rose to put it tidily into the fire. Then she laid her hand on the Duke's shoulder, and said:

“ Besides, they are children—almost children, both of them.”

“ Which makes it worse, Lavinia, and throws the more reproach and blame upon us.”

“ My dear husband, I certainly admit no blame on myself—nor is there blame upon anyone. The Prince desires to marry our daughter. The young people have a true regard for each other. The arrangement, were it to become settled and definite, seems to me good. It is in every way desirable for Mary. If the Prince should ever succeed to the throne—unlikely though that is—and our daughter so ultimately became Queen of England—— ”

“ Tut-tut. She would not become Queen

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of England. The marriage would be morganatic and her children illegitimate."

"Morganatic! Your Grace!"

"It is quite without precedent that a Prince so near to the succession should marry a subject," declared the Duke, fidgetting nervously with his collar, a habit of his when disturbed.

"I must nip this fooling in the bud. I shall go and see Vandaleur."

CHAPTER XII

MRS. HERBERT'S PLOT

VANDALEUR was in a towering rage; he growled at his man like a dog. Every third word was an oath. He sent him packing on a peremptory errand, and when there was no one on whom he could vent his anger he kicked the hassocks about and paced the room like a mad bull.

It was no ordinary temper: it was a fit of violent unreason. He smashed a flimsy chair that was in the way of his fierce strides. He made a clean sweep of a whole row of china ornaments, toppling them to the floor, with one furious wave of his arm and stamping on their fragments in a fury.

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“ I had no idea I loved her so,” he hissed to himself. “ Damn her.”

He strode to a sideboard, and failing to find the key of the tantalus, he smashed it open with his thin wiry fingers. Pouring himself out a stiff glass of whisky, he drank it at a draught and rang the bell. In a moment or two his servant re-appeared.

“ Devil of a time,” he growled. “ Attend to the fire.”

The man put on more coal.

“ Not that way, man. Poke it! ”

The servant poked it.

“ No! Give it to me—imbecile! ”

He dragged the poker out of his servant's hand and flew at the fire like one possessed, scattering the red-hot embers into the grate.

“ Anything else, m'lord? ”

“ Go! ” he retorted with a scowl, and sank into an easy chair, panting, breathless.

For a little while he sat recovering, but was

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still restless. He got himself another glass of whisky, and, biting off the end of a cigar, resumed his seat, staring at what remained of the fire.

When some minutes afterwards his servant came in, Vandaleur was calmer. He had lit his cigar and his temper was cooling.

The man announced Mrs. Herbert of Annandale.

“ She want, I wonder? ” he growled.

“ Mrs. Herbert of Annandale’s compliments, m’lord, and I was to tell your lordship she is accompanied by the Bishop of St. Edmund’s.”

“ Is he here then too? ”

“ Yes, m’lord.”

“ Then why didn’t you say so before, idiot? Where have you shown them? ”

“ Into the next room, m’lord.”

“ Into the ante-room? ” Vandaleur exclaimed testily.

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In explanation the servant quietly began to pick up fragments of broken furniture and crockery.

Vandaleur looked at himself in a mirror and adjusted his neck-tie.

“ Leave those damned things,” he said.
“ Why didn’t you show Mrs. Herbert into the drawing-room? ”

The servant feebly coughed.

“ Go and see if there is anything in the drawing-room that ought to be got out of the way. Understand? Afterwards show those two damn-people in there—you hear—into the drawing-room.”

Vandaleur’s flat consisted of a handsome suite of rooms on a first floor in a large building in Piccadilly.

“ Mind there are no hair-pins, or any other nonsensical kickshaws left littering about. Understand? ”

The servant proceeded to obey, whilst

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Vandaleur went into his dressing-room, for his temper had left him in some disorder.

Nobody had ever seen Vandaleur in a temper. He was regarded as a master of self-control. Even the Irish M.P.'s could never ruffle him, though they often teased him, or tried to do so—always without success.

When he went to the drawing-room Mrs. Herbert and the Bishop were already there.

“Congratulations, my lord,” said Mrs. Herbert, rising to greet him. It was the first time she had seen him since he had been raised to the peerage.

Vandaleur bowed.

Mrs. Herbert of Annandale was of an old Roman Catholic family. Vandaleur professed the same faith. He exchanged civilities with her and with the Bishop, whom he knew well.

“We met Lady Morchester this morning. She was with her sister, Lady Mary Vere,”

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said Mrs. Herbert, with a smile. “ We learned a little secret. It is not out yet, so the Countess assured us.”

“ You interest me, dear Mrs. Herbert,” Vandaleur replied in a voice so suave and bland, and in accents so softly modulated that they almost deserved the accompaniment of sweet music. “ To what secret do you allude—may I ask? ”

“ You have seen the Duke of Rockingham—you are always seeing him, Lord Vandaleur—but have you seen him to-day? ” Mrs. Herbert replied inquisitively.

“ Not half an hour ago, my dear Mrs. Herbert.”

“ Then—I know how intimate you are with his Grace—he has told you the news. Has he or has he not? ”

“ About—er? ” Lord Vandaleur paused discreetly.

“ About the Prince.”

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“ Yes, Mrs. Herbert; the Duke spoke to me about——”

“ About the marriage? ”

“ Yes. His Grace was very much disturbed.”

“ Disturbed! Why should he be? ”

“ The Duke is very modest. He dislikes publicity. He shrinks from glare—always did. And for his daughter’s sake he desires—er—a less brilliant but undoubtedly a happier engagement.”

“ Is one such in contemplation, Lord Vandaleur? ”

Vandaleur fidgetted with his fingers, and controlled himself with difficulty. “ I cannot say,” he replied. “ But the Duke has no desire for Lady Mary to wed above her rank. He recognises that she would be placed in an invidious position if the high fortune which is being thrust upon her—against her will—led her into a morganatic alliance. That would

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seem to be the inevitable result if the Prince presses this inadvisable proposal to an extreme. It is to be hoped the whim will pass; he is but a boy."

"Indeed, he is very young," agreed Mrs. Herbert demurely.

"I wonder what his advisers are thinking of. The responsibility is theirs. Finlayson! Finlayson, he is the man who should stop this folly. What is he doing to allow such unseemly behaviour? For if this culminates it would be contrary to all custom and precedent. I cannot think the King would give it his sanction. The Duke will not, I can assure you of that. I speak, of course, very confidentially."

"I know that whatever your opinion is, Lord Vandaleur, will become the Duke's also," Mrs. Herbert agreed in her ingratiating and flattering manner.

"*Exitus acta probat*," said the Bishop in a deep voice. He was a thin ascetic man with

dark bushy brows, and the restless eyes of a zealot. "But your time, Lord Vandaleur, is valuable. We gossip of the Prince and Lady Mary Vere. We called to see you on quite other business, and to elicit your view upon it, for we share with the Duke of Rockingham the greatest respect for your opinion. It is always practical. The Princess Jeanne Marie——"

"Of France?" asked Vandaleur.

"Of France. It is of her that we would speak."

"You may know perhaps that she went to Rome," observed Mrs. Herbert. "It was in the early days of the War. After waiting some weeks she returned. The death of the Pope—alas." Mrs. Herbert threw up her hands to express her grief.

"I knew that she went to seek an audience with his Holiness," said Vandaleur. "I am not sure whether I ever appreciated her precise object."

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“ The Princess Jeanne Marie unites in herself the aims of many good Catholics. Of these the Restoration of the French Monarchy ranks foremost,” said the Bishop, his eager eyes beginning to burn.

“ The Princess Jeanne Marie is devoted to the Church. She does not realize her great position in the world. She desires to take the veil and the vow of poverty, to devote herself to a strict life of mortification and solitude in conventual retirement.”

“ Miserable sinner,” said Vandaleur, in his sardonic way.

“ Her aims and wishes do the Princess honour. The Church respects her and them. But frankly her great position and opportunities make her too valuable to be thus immured.”

“ Then if you may not lock her in, lock her out. Eh? ”

“ So we have done, my lord. Creditable to the Princess though her desire is to retire from

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the world, I for one opposed her. So, too, did our dear sister, Mrs. Herbert of Annandale."

"In consequence the Princess found herself thwarted in her aims. I thwarted them," declared Mrs. Herbert, bluntly. "Everywhere I prevented her entrance even as a novice. She did not know that I acted in this way. It was essential I should retain her confidence. Hence——"

"Hence your duplicity," said Vandaleur, acidly.

"Yes, I suppose that is the word," Mrs. Herbert assented meekly. "She looks upon me as her friend. And so I am—but not to do her will. I am her friend that she may do mine. She wants to serve Holy Church. She shall serve Holy Church; but not in her own way."

Lord Vandaleur blinked his basilisk eyes. Mrs. Herbert quietly proceeded.

"The Princess realized, however, that someone was thwarting her plans. She put the

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blame on the Lady Superior of the Convent of St. Anne's at Maloo in Belgium, where I last saw her. Assured that someone was frustrating her projects, she sought relief at Rome. The death of the Pope brought her to despair."

"So the Princess is broken. She must execute our will," said the Bishop. "*Volente Deo.*"

"The spiritual advisers of the Princess have counselled her that she could be of greater service to the Church if she implicitly followed their advice as her path of duty and obedience. Her position is exceptional—and our opportunity. Amongst the steadiest aims of Holy Church we count the Restoration of the French Monarchy. I need not explain to you, Lord Vandaleur—to you of all men—what view Holy Church takes of the French Republic. All the world knows how the Republic has harassed the Church, her priests exiled, the convents and monasteries made desolate—even the semin-

aries closed and violated. Holy Church does not love the French Republic. We hope the War will assist the Church to defeat and destroy it utterly."

"There your hopes are based on sand," Vandaleur replied. "The French Republic will emerge from the War chastened and strengthened. The Republic will be more firmly rooted in France than it has ever been."

"I am not without grave fears that you are right, Lord Vandaleur," agreed the Bishop, shaking his head in sorrow. "Also that the triumph of France which we all desire, must be a triumph also for the Republic."

"Well. Proceed, I beg. I interrupted your Grace."

"I turn then to the subject which more than any other is dear to the heart of Rome. Need I say I allude to the conversion of England. The conversion of England!" The Bishop

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clasped his lean hands, and, closing his eyes, fervently muttered a silent prayer.

Mrs. Herbert was not less devout. Fingering her rosary, she also silently prayed for a few moments, reverently bowing.

Vandaleur regarded them both with a calm, expressionless gaze, but an imperceptible shrug of his shoulders indicated his opinion of them.

The Bishop put his transparent fingers together and proceeded:

“ The purpose of all Rome will not be effected without instruments. The conversion of England must be brought about step by step. Innumerable aids must be brought to bear. Advantage must be taken of every political event—of every social incident. Endeavour must be made, as in past days, upon the lines of our old historical methods by politic acts, by wisely contrived projects of various kinds—not the least by family alliances. We require

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worldly instruments to effect our aims, women, as well as men, devoted to our cause."

"Quite! Quite!" Vandaleur agreed; but he looked at his watch.

"To this end who so ready to the Church's need as the Princess Jeanne Marie? Mrs. Herbert understands better than I how to utilize the value of the Princess. I need not remind you, Lord Vandaleur, of the immense service Mrs. Herbert has rendered to the cause we love. I only mention—Spain."

"I know," said Vandaleur, thoughtfully. "I know. I know. The work of the wire-puller was very subtle, very clever, and even the puppets themselves are, I believe, unconscious who pulled the strings that made them dance—in fact, that anyone pulled any strings at all."

"So," said Mrs. Herbert, nodding her masterful head.

Vandaleur contemplated her with awakening

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admiration of her mental qualities. He knew—though he had temporarily forgotten—how much this placid, plain-looking woman had done during the last twenty years of her life to influence men and women, how successfully, how effectively she had taken advantage of passing events and trifling opportunities to control those affairs that others have deemed to be the result of idle chance.

With genuine respect he took her hand and shook it, for she had accomplished much.

“ The Princess Jeanne Marie must not be wasted,” said Mrs. Herbert, simply. “ This daughter of the French Kings must not be taken off the chess-board. She must play her part in the Church’s plans. She must assist whether she will or no in our effort, whether it be successful or not, to restore her House to France—above all she must assist in the conversion of England to the Church of Rome.”

“ Is she fitted for such a rôle? ”

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“ If obstinacy and self-will are qualifications for the part, she will play it to perfection.”

“ Ah. You have given this matter much thought and care. Then you realize the difficulties that lie before you. On what assistance can you rely? The Church will give you her blessing, but what substantial aid? ”

“ In all worldly projects the Church is prone to stand aloof,” the Bishop solemnly declared, *basso profundo*, as preface to a subsequent statement in which he intended to express the precise contrary.

Lord Vandaleur emitted a dry cynical laugh.

“ The power of Rome has limitations,” Mrs. Herbert suggested, with a deferential gesture to the Bishop and a diplomatic glance at Vandaleur. “ In the twentieth century her conscience prohibits her activity in mundane affairs. The late Pontiff would not condescend to political plots. What Pope Benedict XV. will

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do we know not yet. The Cardinals and Princes of the Church refrain from any participation in enterprises that savour in the least degree of duplicity or of devious procedure. Our priesthood is single-minded and spiritual, and will take no hand in dubious enterprises or worldly ambitions. But there are devout Catholics in the rank and file who are not so particular. Some of us women are zealots. We may be able to contrive, somehow. *Cela viendra*. Women are perhaps more easily disposed than men to believe that the end justifies the means. Even one woman can do much for England."

"So. So, Lord Vandaleur, we seek your advice," the Bishop said deferentially.

"I know so little of the French Royalists—nothing of the Princess Jeanne Marie. I saw in 'The Times' lately that her brother has offered his sword in vain to France. The Republic is too clever to accept the double-edged

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weapon. In my opinion he has no chance. The French Monarchists are but a picturesque survival. *Sans phrase*, the cause of the Bourbons is past. The cause of the Orleans family is lost."

Mrs. Herbert and the Bishop exchanged a furtive glance.

"But mine is a mere opinion—and a mere regret," Vandaleur continued with a shrug. "One piece of information I can give you. It is not generally known—you may get from the fact what comfort you will: it is only relevant indirectly. Prince Christian of Hesse was married in Berlin only yesterday to an American lady—Miss Elizabeth Rogerson, of New York. The ceremony was attended by the United States Ambassador. It will cause no little flutter when the news becomes generally known."

"We can rely upon your Lordship's accuracy."

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“ With absolute certainty, my dear lady. It is quite another affair, of course. But it shows that the German Royal Family is disposed to be less exclusive since the War broke out. It shows that a Royal Alliance with America is not impossible. I attach great consequence to this plain fact. However. *Revenons à nous moutons*. Where is the Princess Jeanne Marie? She was in Belgium. She has returned from Rome. Where is she now? ”

“ She is staying with Mrs. Herbert of Annandale,” the Bishop answered.

“ Ah, in England then.”

“ And with her best friend,” Mrs. Herbert remarked, with a significant smile. “ So, at least she is advised by Cardinal Renouf, who is the most astute of them all, and who has gained her ear. She saw him in Rome, and—he is on a brief visit now to England.”

“ And what are your plans with regard to her—exactly? ”

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“ I am giving a Nativity play at Christmas. I hope to induce the Princess to take a leading part. It is true she cannot act, but the whole thing will be little more than a series of *tableaux vivants*. We can dress her, and we can pose her for her *rôle*. All she will have to do will be to remain quite still for one whole minute. I believe she can do it. Really. *Ce monde est plein de fous.*”

They laughed at her cynicism.

“ But what has this to do with your high projects? ”

“ This: to give a play there must be characters, and several young people of the best families will be visiting us. There must be rehearsals. So my house-party will last for a week. Quite distinguished people are coming to stay with us. Viscount Islippe is coming with his two sons and the Viscountess. Ripon, perhaps, and Cork certainly.”

“ Norfolk? ”

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“ Norfolk unfortunately cannot; but Hubert and Algernon Fortescue, the Viscount’s sons, they will. They are great chums, as nobody is better aware than your lordship, with all that frivolous Eton set—Cholmondeley amongst them—who still rejoice in their nickname—the Butterflies. They all went on to Magdalen and distinguished themselves and Oxford by their follies—none more so than Hubert and Algy.”

“ Quite so. Everybody knows.”

“ Well, the Prince is also to visit Mrs. Herbert of Annandale.”

“ What Prince? ” Lord Vandaleur exclaimed sharply.

“ His Royal Highness who, to your sorrow, is so interested in Lady Mary Vere.”

Vandaleur, usually so wary, started.

The Bishop, who rarely smiled, did so now.

“ Mrs. Herbert,” he continued, “ hopes that the Princess Jeanne Marie will play her

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part so well as to upset the hopes of the Duke's daughter."

"Does it matter whether the excuse is to produce a play or to pop at rabbits?" said Mrs. Herbert. "The young people will be there, and—I shall be there too."

Vandaleur smiled delightedly.

"My dear Bishop, there is something in this. Mrs. Herbert of Annandale is very ingenious. Upon my word, she is very clever," and, crossing over to the sofa where she sat, he grasped her hand with great cordiality.

"You are not here, Mrs. Herbert," he said. "You have no ears. I cannot help saying these things about you, even though you are present. But the Prince—he will not play? He will not take a part—will he?"

"I hope so. I shall ask him at first—yes—I shall ask him in the presence of the Princess."

"But will he—will he?"

"His gallantry will not permit him to refuse.

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How could he? Under such circumstances, to refuse would be to offer an affront to France."

Vandaleur hummed a gay tune.

" Besides, I shall rely on the vanity of Mr. Finlayson. He—so I am told—regards himself as a superb actor. He is another Irving—Tree's superior. He is sure to take a part and will induce the Prince to do so too."

" Finlayson! " laughed Vandaleur. " He was at Balliol with me. Yes; he does fancy himself as a Thespian. I always looked on him as a fool."

" Then I shall ask him to play the part of one of the Wise Men from the East," lisped Mrs. Herbert demurely.

" But what part do you devise for the Prince? "

A sly gleam shot from Mrs. Herbert's quiet eyes.

" Oh! something—anything—some part where he has to hold the hand of the Princess.

Her pulse beats very quickly, and if his Highness feels it throbbing for a whole minute—Satan will do the rest.”

“ It will not be the first time that Satan has helped to play the cards of Holy Church,” Vandaleur remarked with a chuckle.

“ But why Satan? ” asked the Bishop gravely, in a deep voice that sounded like the rumble of distant thunder. “ Neither of the young people has taken the vow of celibacy. The quick pulse hath no sin. *Deus vult*. Nature speaks with the voice of God.”

“ God or Satan,” murmured Vandaleur with a grin. “ Either suits me. If the Prince is as susceptible to feminine charms as his forbears had the reputation of being, the plot may work. And an excellent plot it is; an excellent plot; an excellent plot, dear Mrs. Herbert.”

CHAPTER XIII

LORD VANDALEUR'S PARTY

ONE of the reasons why Vandaleur's dinner parties were always so successful was that he entertained at a round table, and that the flowers in the centre of it were in a low rose-bowl, but little raised above the cloth, so that everyone could see and hear everybody else. He always had talkers at the table worth listening to. This would not alone be enough to warrant the exclusion of those banks of flowers upon a dining-table, which so many hostesses provide for our delectation. These have their advantages, not the least sometimes being that they hide our *vis-a-vis*. But Vandaleur made a point of atoning for a degree of paucity in

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his floral decoration, by much concern as to the rarity of the flowers displayed, and yet more by care to always have present one or two ladies whose loveliness shed a radiance of beauty around greater than any flower that ever bloomed.

Doubtless his chef was a gastronomer and an artist, but Vandaleur himself, though he rarely interfered with him, always considered the *menu*, and especially the creation of a new *entrée*. There is a piquancy in the rather tedious business of dining, if the dishes served to one are new as well as toothsome, and although a creation is apt to awake dread in the apprehension of an epicure, when a reputation has been achieved, confidence being established, interest awakes. He disliked dishes that were too renowned. The lurking flavour in a curried lobster need not always be grated cocoa-nut. Vandaleur discovered that parsley and bayleaf impart a more delicate delight.

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True, he would never permit an infringement on the recipes of Colbert, except that he would sometimes allow mignonette-pepper to be substituted for cayenne, but he frequently made audacious variations on the menus of Chateaubriand and of most of the famous gastronomers.

He banished utterly all flavoured vinegars, and insisted on natural herbs. He was a daring innovator in salads. He only allowed the young green shoots of tarragon instead of the older leaves in general use. The successes of his table indeed were mainly attributable to his use of simples.

Perhaps another reason for the success of his dinners was that Vandaleur was a bachelor.

At a bachelor's table the very absence of a hostess continually suggests to the guests that one may relax in the extreme of decorum. If ever one may partake freely of liberally proffered wines, it is on such an occasion. A degree of impropriety in conversation, too, if

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ever permissible, may then be perhaps excused, if wit quickens the tongue and justifies an exuberant hilarity. In a word, even conversation is then *en garçon*, and everything is permitted.

Vandaleur's reputation as an epicure and as a host was so soundly established that his dinners were famous. His guests knew they would have the best wines procurable, selected most appropriately to harmonize with the several dishes, and reliable in condition and temperature, as well as in age and flavour.

Gastronomy and epicureanism may become odious if the dinner one partakes of is the sole end of it. But there was never any suggestion of pigs in clover at Lord Vandaleur's. His guests brought something to the table themselves. The conversation often sparkled, anecdote was not only pointed, but commendably brief. If argument intruded it was excused by *bavardage*. That the meats and the

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wines should be superb was reasonable, for the belle and the wit were supreme.

All this from thought and care—the two words so often on his lips which had guided his career. Thought and care influenced Vandaleur's every action in life, whether in trivial things or greater, whether in the choice of the *hors d'œuvres* or the selection of a Minister for a Cabinet appointment—a subject on which his advice had more weight with the Prime Minister than Mr. Asquith knew, for Vandaleur's advice was generally imparted so indirectly that one never knew it had been given at all. But Vandaleur thought quickly and acted decisively. He had a nimble mind.

His dinners were one of the sources of his influence. He always had interesting people at his table, and not too many at once. And these, as Mrs. Malaprop, whom he frequently entertained, once remarked, were "very variegated." The Duke of Rockingham was some-

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times his guest, and Archdeacon McKilligan a very frequent one.

The Archdeacon was very fond of Vandaleur. He had not met him as Lord Vandaleur until this very evening, but he liked him as clerics do like the extreme man of the world. The fact that he had become Lord Vandaleur was a further indication of his success in super-worldliness, which caused the Archdeacon to like him better still, and Mrs. McKilligan—the Archdeacon's second (and second best) wife—liked him too.

The Archdeacon was a talker, and when he engaged Vandaleur there was sometimes a pretty passage of arms, but this evening there was little wit in the air. Lord Vandaleur had lost his accustomed sparkle. He had expected the Duke and Duchess of Rockingham and Lady Mary Vere. But at the last moment they had disappointed him. The host's lack of brilliance re-acted on the whole table and

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caused a prevailing dullness. Conversation was abandoned to the ladies, and they were all prattling of the Prince.

"There are rumours of an impending marriage," said the Marchioness of Shirehampton archly. She was fishing for news.

"But I think they have been denied," replied Mr. Lloyd, who had a cautious temperament, without any humour.

"If the rumour is denied, it may be true," Sir Lancelot Granby remarked, with a cynical smile, and taking up the *menu* he read it very studiously.

"Is there anything, Sir Lancelot, in the rumour about Russia and the Prince?" asked a dark woman in yellow.

"Possibly," he answered laconically, as he helped himself to caviare. "I won't say—but this caviare is *à la Russe*."

"No, not possibly," said an *attaché*, formerly at the Balls platz, who never agreed with Sir

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Lancelot. "Russia is looking at the war in a much more serious way than we in England are. I can give you evidence of that. The Czar has prohibited vodka, but the ladies of the Russian Court are sterner still: marriages will not even be dreamed of there till the war is over."

"Then the war won't last very long," a lady novelist remarked, whose books were regarded as profound revelations of human nature.

"The Prince was at Annandale at Christmas," said the Marchioness. "His name was connected a good deal at the time with the Princess Jeanne Marie of France. He was in the Nativity Play. They both were. I can assure you the Prince was much interested. Has anything come of it? The French Princess and Mrs. Herbert have gone to Spain."

"The very place for building castles in the air," said the Archdeacon lightly.

"In point of fact they are now staying at a

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chateau en Espagne," Lord Vandaleur rejoined with his dry laugh.

"I hear the French Princes have been building one there for a long time past," the Archdeacon replied as drily as his host.

"There was a little gossip lately about the Prince and his Royal cousin," said Mrs. McKilligan, adjusting her pince-nez. "I don't know whether there was anything in that. They are about of an age and she is a very lovely woman."

"I heard something vaguely too," remarked Mr. Lloyd, as he helped himself to some oysters *à la Carnot*. "It would be a rather popular thing if the Prince married the belle of the family."

"The Princess is very pretty undoubtedly. And what's more, she's ambitious. There may be some truth in the rumour," observed a radiant lady whose voice was a delight to the ear.

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"It is pleasant to know that the Prince himself is shaping admirably," the Archdeacon remarked. "He is good and wise. He may even become a scholar if the war does not deviate him from his studies. But I hear he is going to the Front."

"Where there is so much smoke, Venerable Sir, there must be some fire," the Marchioness observed, in her most deferential manner. It was a remark she always made at every dinner-party, whether it was *apropos* or not.

"Tell us, Lord Vandaleur," asked the Marquis, palating his Rudesheim-berg. "You know everything. What is the real truth? We did hear at White's that an alliance was being distilled for the Prince in Russia. That has been denied. But now the *on dit* is that the Duchess of Rockingham has arranged to match him with her second daughter. I wonder."

"Lord Vandaleur should know," said Mrs. McKilligan.

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"You should be better informed than I am," Lord Vandaleur replied, and with a view to avoiding a discussion of the topic. "The Archdeacon often has occasion to meet his Majesty, and might get the truth from the fountain head."

"But the Archdeacon is so discreet that he never knows anything," replied Mrs. McKilligan.

The Archdeacon's twinkle glinted over his lifted glass.

"I met Mrs. Asquith this afternoon," remarked the Marchioness, whose well-modelled face was so heavily enamelled that she never dared to show the least trace of any expression lest the enamel should crack. "She was at Harrod's, and I meant to speak to her, if only three words, but she was so busy shopping she didn't see me. So I'm none the wiser. Mrs. Asquith would have known."

"I never discuss these things," said Lord

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Vandaleur, displeased that the topic had arisen. "For my own part, were I ever concerned in an engagement, I should keep it to myself as long as possible. But I never have been." He thought it as well to publish that fact to the table, though he wished his guests would talk of something else.

"There is no mystery about it whatever," declared that dominating personage, Lady Aberdare Merry, closing her lorgnettes with a snap, and speaking in the decisive manner that carries conviction. "True, it's hardly out yet—but it will be no secret to-morrow. I doubt if Mrs. Asquith knows, but I can tell you the whole truth on unimpeachable authority. The Prince has declared his affection for Lady Mary Vere. She fully reciprocates it, and it is likely soon to be made public. The Duke, however, her father, withholds his consent unless the King——"

"Has it got so far as that?" interrupted Mr. Lloyd. "Then this is indeed news."

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“There is no doubt about its importance,” agreed Lady Aberdare Merry.

“I hear that the Duke’s approval really hangs upon the opinion of the Attorney-General, who has been consulted on the legal aspect of the proposed union. It is quite a ticklish affair.”

“All marriages ought to be that,” said the Archdeacon twinkling again.

“The Prince is determined to marry her,” continued Lady Aberdare Merry positively, and looking at the Archdeacon with a glance that seemed to say she would stand no levity even from him.

“How very interesting,” said the Marchioness. “I wonder how you came to be the first to know. May we push you?”

“No, Marchioness, indeed you may not,” replied Lady Aberdare Merry firmly. “But you may rely on what I have told you. I’m inspired.”

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"If the news is—ur—final," said Sir Lancelot Granby, frowning and biting the ends of his fingers, "ur—they will be very cross at the F.O." (Sir Lancelot was one of the Under-Secretaries at the Foreign Office.) "I have good reason to know that my chief—but—ur—I'd better not say; it would be indiscreet to talk about him. Only I will say this, we have heard nothing whatever about Lady Aberdare Merry's story at the F.O."

"You surprise me, Sir Lancelot," exclaimed the Marchioness, "for they would know at the Foreign Office, wouldn't they? I had heard the Prince's name connected with a Russian Princess."

"Ah! When you insist on Russia you are getting warmer," said Sir Lancelot Granby, turning with a smile towards the Marchioness.

"I believe the Russian rumour to be without foundation," Lady Aberdare Merry contended, in a superior manner.

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“It is all very well to deny it, but some of us are in the secret,” Sir Lancelot calmly repeated, and he nodded his head in a way which plainly said, “I know more about this than I choose to tell.”

“I shouldn’t wonder,” said the Marchioness, looking defiantly at Lady Aberdare Merry. “Really, I shouldn’t at all wonder if Sir Lancelot’s information is quite as accurate as her ladyship’s.”

“My information!” exclaimed Sir Lancelot, with a deprecating gesture, but with a smile of gratitude to the Marchioness. “I hope I have said nothing indiscreet. I have given no information whatever. I can only repeat we have certainly not heard Lady Aberdare Merry’s story at the F.O.”

“The early future will prove my story to be true,” Lady Aberdare Merry repeated, with an air of confidence. “The Prince has gone this very day to Rockingham as Lady Mary’s

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accepted suitor. The Prince will marry the Duke's daughter. You may take that as positive. The announcement will be in the 'Morning Post' to-morrow."

"To-morrow!" everybody exclaimed in one breath.

CHAPTER XIV

THE HOUSE OF HANOVER

EVERYBODY at the table was so interested by Lady Aberdare Merry's positive statement that the silence which followed was really impressive. But silence never lasted long at Vandaleur's dinner-table.

"I for one am glad to hear the announcement your ladyship has made," declared Squire Bull. "Very, very glad." Squire Bull was a famous M.F.H. and the highly respected M.P. for an agricultural borough in Yorkshire; a man who was equally beloved by his neighbours in the manufacturing towns of the West Riding, where he often spoke at public meet-

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ings. He was famous in Parliament for his brusque manner and plain speaking, and he was equally blunt in private life. "I sincerely hope the Prince will marry an Englishwoman. God bless him if he does. I put in a plea for the Anglicization of the English Monarchy. It's about time."

"What did you say about the time?" asked the Marquis, with his hand to his ear. Private conversations with his wife had made him rather deaf, for her voice on those occasions was piercing, not to say strident.

"I say it's time for the Anglicization of the English Monarchy."

Again Sir Lancelot made his deprecating gesture.

"Yes, sir, high time!" repeated Squire Bull, whilst everybody stared aghast. "Our English Monarchy has far too long been foreign. Take the pedigree of our Kings. Look at the genealogical table. Every school-

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boy knows it. It's part of the curriculum of every school-board child. Take 'em from William the Conqueror downwards right away to our present King. Pick out the English Sovereigns: there are precious few amongst 'em!"

"Surely some of the early ones——" said the Archdeacon's wife, knitting her brows reflectively.

"Wasn't Henry the Eighth an Englishman?" asked the Marquis timorously, and in an undertone, as he glanced nervously at his wife.

"Henry the Eighth," cried Squire Bull, "that indeed he was, and his son, the boy Edward the Sixth, was the very last King of English blood ever to sit upon the British throne."

"But Henry's race died out," Mrs. McKilligan observed. "Edward VI: Mary: Elizabeth: none of them left heirs."

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"Not one, of course. Our children know it, if we've forgotten. Edward the Sixth was, I repeat, the last King of English blood on the throne of England." Squire Bull looked round the table defiantly as he said it.

"So long ago as that," exclaimed one of the belles, exhibiting a dazzling smile. "Edward the Sixth the last English King? Why, he lived ages ago."

"It can't be challenged," said Squire Bull. "There have been purely English Queens, but no man King since Henry the Eighth's son Edward. There were his daughters Mary and Elizabeth; there was Dutch William's wife—and Anne. Queen Anne was, in fact, the last sovereign of English blood. It's a commonplace truth, but it's never said. And what's never said is never realized."

"I—I confess I never realized it: if what you say is so. But is it?" asked the Marquis.

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"I never had a school-board education, unfortunately."

"Nor, to my sorrow be it said, did I," agreed Mr. Lloyd, "though I believe it's the best education a child can have. Perhaps some day our sons will get equally well taught at Eton. But do you mean to say it's true—what you say? We all ought to know."

"I repeat, Henry the Eighth's son, Edward the Sixth, was the last King of English blood on the British throne. That's centuries ago."

"Centuries since we had an English King!" several voices exclaimed. "Well, if that's true, very few English people know it."

"Think of them one by one. After Elizabeth—James."

"James the First of England—Sixth of Scotland," said Mrs. McKilligan. "At least he was British."

"He was not English. Darnley was his

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father. The Dauphin of France his grandfather."

"He was British through Mary Queen of Scots," said Mrs. McKilligan, firmly.

"But James was a foreigner, madam, when he came to the throne. Scotland was not united with England until the days of Queen Anne, remember."

"Yes. The Act of Union was passed in the reign of Queen Anne," remarked the Archdeacon, reflectively.

"I have heard that Queen Anne is dead," drawled Vandaleur.

"Well, after Anne, the Hanoverians," Mrs. McKilligan said, laying her *pince-nez* on the table.

"And since the day when George the First ascended the throne, the English Sovereigns have been German," Squire Bull persisted. "The four Georges and William the Fourth, even our beloved Queen Victoria, even Edward

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the Seventh, all of them were of mainly German blood. Our present King (God bless him—long may he reign), is not so Germanized in origin as his seven immediate predecessors. His Danish mother saved us that. And as he married a Teck, the rising Royal family is thereby in some measure ameliorated again.”

“Will somebody whistle ‘It’s a long, long way to Tipperary’?” asked one of the pretty ladies with a giggle.

“Yes, it’s a very long, long way back to Edward the Sixth—if that’s what you mean,” Squire Bull answered.

“The first two Georges were of course notoriously German, spoke German, lived as much as they could in Germany, and disliked England,” said Mrs. McKilligan. “George the Third was thoroughly German in blood, and married a German wife. So did George the Fourth. But I thought dear old Queen

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Victoria was as English as we are. Surely she was English born."

"Her father, the Duke of Kent, was in a frantic haste to hurry to England that she might be born on English soil," Squire Bull agreed. "Victoria was English born in the sense that her mother posted to England just in time for the birth of her daughter to occur in the land where she subsequently lived out her splendid reign. But her mother, the Duchess of Kent, was German, just as her father was the son of a German mother. In Queen Victoria's day the Royal Family usually spoke German in private life. As for our dear King Edward, the son of Prince Albert of Saxe-Coburg, he spoke with a strong German accent all the days of his life."

"So he did," agreed Sir Lancelot. "I've had many a chat with him at the F.O."

"Our Royal Family for generations has only

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been English born: it has not been English bred," Squire Bull insisted.

"Well, of course, everyone knows that, if we think it out. But our Royal family has English blood in it," contended Lady Aberdare Merry.

"Precious little," replied Squire Bull bluntly. "There was a very little English blood in George the First. Historians and schoolboys can tell you exactly how much. I've forgotten."

"But I remember," said Mrs. McKilligan. "George the First came to the throne of England in the year 1714, on the death of Queen Anne, because he was the son of Sophia Electress of Hanover, who was herself descended through her mother from James the First.

"But we ought to go back even further," said the Archdeacon. "So far as any English blood in our present King is concerned, it is

GENEALOGICAL TABLE. **JAMES THE FIRST TO GEORGE THE FIFTH.**

James VI. of Scotland
I. of England married Anne of Denmark.

Elizabeth m. Frederic Elector Palatine.

Ernest Elector of Hanover m. Sophia d. of Elector Palatine (German).

George I. of Hanover m. Sophia of Celle (German).

George II. m. Caroline of Anspach (German).

George III. m. Charlotte of Mechlenburg Strelitz (German).

George IV. m.
Caroline of
Brunswick
(German).

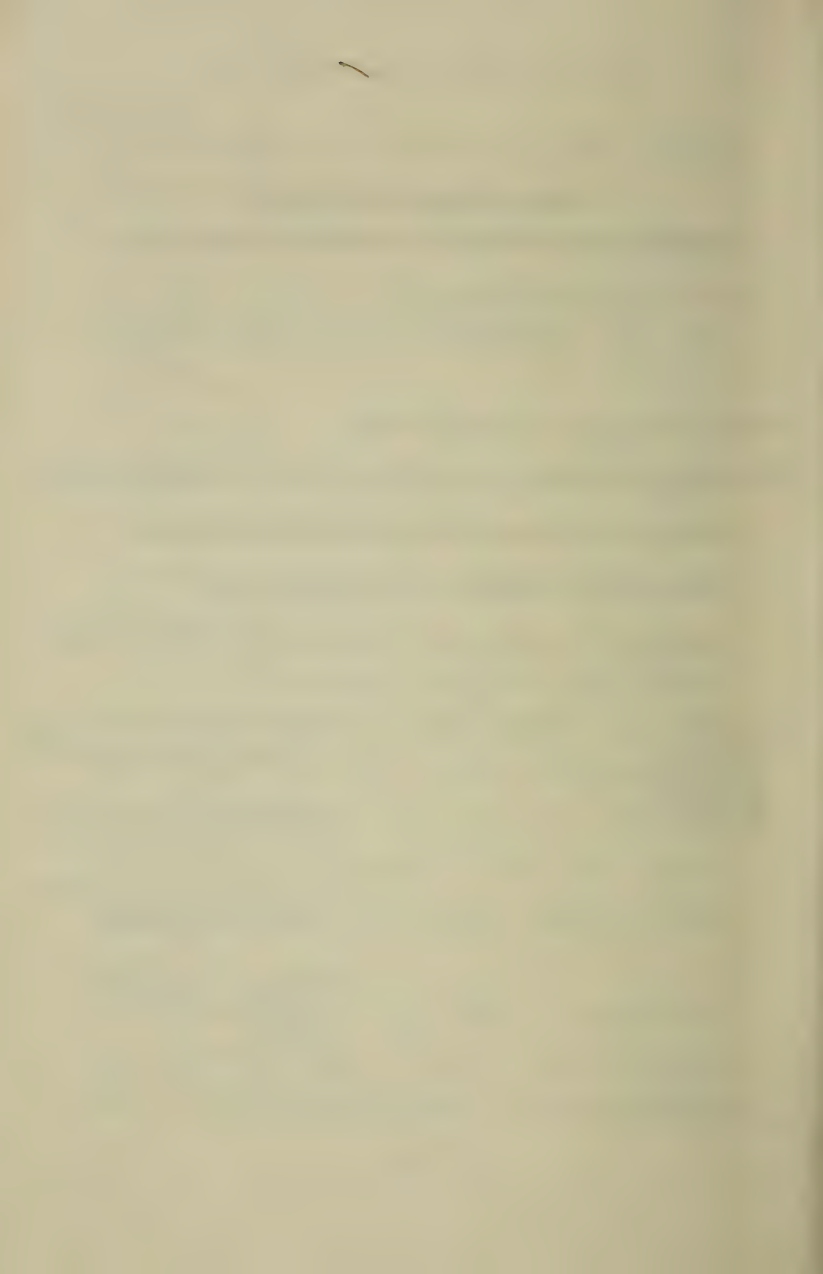
William IV.

Duke of Kent m. Victoria
of Saxe-Coburg (German).

Victoria m. Albert of Saxe-
Coburg Gotha (German).

Edward VII. m. Alexandra
of Denmark (Dane).

George V. m. Mary,
daughter of Duke of
Teck.



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derived from Henry VII., through his daughter Margaret, who married James the Fourth of Scotland. That marriage contract was arranged in the year 1496; at about the same date Columbus discovered the New World. You have to go back as far as that to trace English blood in our present line of Kings."

"My dear sir," said Vandaleur, turning towards Squire Bull, "if your labour is to prove that our English Monarchy has largely emanated from Germany, we all freely admit it. Every child in the country over seven years of age can relate the genealogy of the British Sovereigns. But what of it?"

"What of it?" Squire Bull echoed.

"Yes,—what of it? I think it is a little unjust to our recent monarchs to regard them as foreign. For generations they have been British born."

"British born!—what of that?" Squire Bull exclaimed. "German blood does not become

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British when a child happens to be born in a certain geographical area."

"No, no," Vandaleur assented, sipping his champagne.

"Race is not the accident of geography. Racial qualities are inbred. If a coal-black nigger brought from Central Africa to travel with a circus, has a child by a negro wife whilst casually resident in the Fulham Road, that child, though black as a coal, certes, is British born; but he is not of British race, surely. And if his coal-black progeny continues during generations to marry other negroes, their offspring will not, though all of them be born in the British Isles, change their dark skins and become of British race—no, not even in two hundred years. The Jew after a thousand years even, is still a Jew."

"Unmistakably," agreed Sir Lancelot. "Geography does not eradicate the characteristics of a Jew. Geography makes them."

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A Jew of Judea is still a Jew long after he has left Judea. Though he change his name from Levi to Montagu or Capulet, still he is a Jew, and his children's children will have Judaic noses——”

“Till the end of time, Sir Lancelot.”

“I thought, Squire, you were an admirer of Lord Beaconsfield,” said a dark-eyed lady, reproachfully.

“So I am: and of the beautiful ladies of the wonderful race that Lord Beaconsfield so wonderfully adorned. That Benjamin D’Israeli became Prime Minister of England, that Rothschild became a Peer, that Goschen was made Chancellor of the Exchequer, that our Lord Chief Justice is a Jew, as also that our Kings have been for generations of mainly German race, shows how ready we so-called English people are to act generously to the alien, to assimilate other races, and even to

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commingle our best blood with theirs. Do you not agree with me, Lady Merry?"

"With every word you say, Squire Bull."

"But we do not wish to entirely eradicate ourselves in the process. Let some English blood, some British blood to say the least, be brought into our Monarchy."

"Is it not an affair exclusively for women?" asked the Marchioness. "As Suffragettes we women can perhaps effect very little. But this project for the Anglicization of the British Princes is a work for women—and for women only. On this carpet we are supreme." She looked at the Marquis, who was accustomed to quail at her least glance. "You men can do nothing in this. The Anglicization of the Monarchy is a good cry. It should become a great national project. But it is a woman's question pure and simple."

"It is a question for one pure and simple woman," Squire Bull replied with a laugh.

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“It is a question that must be—popped,” hesitated the principal belle. “It must be popped before it can be answered.”

“It is a question for the women Howards, the women Churchills, the women Wellesleys——” the Marchioness interjected.

“And why not for the women Smiths, and the women Jones and Robinsons?” inquired Mrs. McKilligan, who prided herself on being one of the people.

Every pretty woman at the table flushed a deeper rose. In each fair bosom a glimmer awoke that might perchance some day be fanned into a bright particular glow, and every sweet pair of lips murmured in gentle chorus: “Why not?”

“Ah! Now we get to an entirely new side of the subject,” Sir Lancelot remarked. “The marriage of a Prince to a Peer’s daughter is one question. His marriage to a Commoner is another.”

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“If you are going to discuss the Divine right of Kings,” said Lord Vandaleur.

“The Divine right of Kings!” exclaimed the Archdeacon, who was a low-churchman. “The Kaiser has ended that claim for ever. His familiar association of himself with the Godhead, his blasphemous assumptions simultaneously with his really sublime hypocrisy in pretending to be the Prophet of Allah, is conduct offensive both to God and man. His sins against Humanity are colossal iniquities, but the sins he will most repent are those against his own family.”

“You have said what all the world is thinking, Venerable Sir,” Squire Bull heartily agreed.

“Never was there a family in history so illustrious,” the Archdeacon continued warmly. “The Kaiser has set it by the ears. In him and his fathers nearly all the Royal families of Europe and of Christendom met and were

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united. By this war these families are for ever, through him, estranged. Kaiser William has wrought a grievous disservice upon them all. I confess I find it very difficult to pray for him."

"But don't confess what you say when you do pray for him," said a pert lady, naughtily.

"The Kaiser has shown," said Mr. Lloyd, ignoring the flippancy, "how hollow any Royal alliance with a foreign Princedom is if its object be to ensure the peace of nations. If the grandsons of such a great monarch as Queen Victoria can array themselves in hostility against Great Britain, how futile for the cause of peace is any Royal alliance. If Prince Albert Christian of Schleswig Holstein, grandson of our great Victoria, whose family is dependent on British taxpayers to the extent of £6,000 a year, is in arms against us and at war with the people who have nurtured him,

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the depth of base ingratitude is surely plumbed to its utmost profundity."

"I had hoped our young Princes will some day ally themselves in marriage with Princesses of one or other of the Royal Houses of Europe," said the Archdeacon, mournfully. His tone of regret was sincere, for he was sorry he had just allowed the footman to pass him by when he was serving a *chiffonade* of chicken. "But," he said, waving aside this mild sorrow, "such a hope is contra-indicated by the present state of European politics. The British people will be averse to any further alliance with any Princess of that illustrious German family; the Kaiser has contaminated it. Allied though it is to almost every throne in Europe it is inbred again and again. The sovereign people will desire to have fresh blood introduced into the veins of their Kings and Princes."

"My dear Archdeacon, I am of your mind

entirely," Squire Bull assented. " The present war throws a fierce light upon the occupants of the English throne. The country has been wonderfully loyal—thank God!—loyal to herself and loyal to the King. I hope and think she will continue to be loyal. The democracy has been wonderful. The unanimity of the people has been really splendid. The political parties—the Unionist Party especially, set a splendid example, but the working classes have acted quite as nobly. Their loyalty has been quite as fine. There have been some strikes unfortunately. Little higgling questions about "subs" and an extra penny an hour. Regrettable but unimportant. With a few exceptions the behaviour of the people has been exemplary. I believe in the working classes. They have raised no trouble; they might have done. There has been opportunity enough. What think you of the conduct of

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the Duke of Brunswick and Cumberland—the heir of the King of Hanover? ”

“ I think no more of the King of Hanover, sir.”

“ Be sure of this,” Squire Bull continued, “ no imported Princess of German race will be a *persona grata* in England for many a long day to come. We will suffer loyally such of our Princes as are already of largely German origin, but we will import no more.”

“ Hurrah! ” cried the pert lady, clattering with her dessert knife in ironical applause.

“ But do you say that our King is a German? ” asked the Marchioness, moving restlessly in her chair, and so excited that she even forgot the fragility of her complexion.

“ I should be indignant if anyone said that,” Squire Bull replied.

“ Indignant! ” exclaimed the Archdeacon, “ I should think so indeed. Our King a German! Certainly not. George of Eng-

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land, a German! Preposterous! If there is one man in whom more than in another the best English blood flows, surely it is the King. In the veins of George the Fifth is the blood of Egbert, the blood of the Vikings, the blood of Alfred the Great, the very Founder and Maker of England. If King Alfred the Great is not an ancestor to be proud of, where shall an Englishman look for ancestral honour? ”

“ A thousand years ago,” observed Mrs. McKilligan musingly, as she glanced at her husband.

“ And has he not the blood of all the English Kings through the centuries ever since? ” the Archdeacon asked in his sure, impressive and convincing manner. “ The Normans, the Plantagenets, the Tudors. Aye; back through the Tudors to the Welsh, to the Celts and early Britons of the days long before Christ—back through the Stuarts to the Gaels and to Bruce and Balliol, George the Fifth is through his

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ancestors British as surely as he is English. His ancient lineage is the ideal for the Monarch of the British Empire."

"True," said Squire Bull. "His present Majesty comes of a long line of English Kings. He had origin in the ancestral races of our remote Past. He is of Royal Saxon, of Royal Norman, of Royal Celtic and Gaelic blood. He is British in the widest sense."

"And therefore we love and honour him," said the Marchioness loyally.

"We do love and honour him," repeated Squire Bull. "We will magnify all that is in him of the Normans, of the Plantagenets, of the Tudors, of the Stuarts. We will try to forget what is German, and remember that one-half of him is Dane. But in the successors of his successor let there be English, I pray, in his constitution, English blood in his being, English tenderness in his heart."

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"That can only come through a marriage, my good sir," said the Archdeacon.

"Precisely. And therefore I hope her ladyship's news is true. It would be one point to the good. Lord Vandaleur, I wish toasts had not gone out. I would give you one. I will." Squire Bull lifted his glass.

"A rose of England!" he cried in the old-fashioned way.

And all the table drank the toast with enthusiasm.

"A rose of England!" Vandaleur echoed, raising his wine and rising to his feet, but his face had grown very white.

When his guests had gone Lord Vandaleur became himself.

He repaired to his library, flung a favourite cat out of his chair, and, unlocking a drawer in his desk, took out some papers docketed "Rockingham."

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When he had found the document he sought he carefully perused it and put it in his pocket.

"It is as I thought," he mused. "The Duke is under my thumb. I was sure of it, but it is always well to verify. I invariably proceed with thought and care."

Upon his desk, upon the mantel-piece, and also upon a little side table, were several framed photographs of Lady Mary Vere. He looked at them one after another, and still holding one of them in his hands, gazed upon the portrait lingeringly and long.

"And if your father is under my thumb," he murmured, "you are under my thumb, too, my Lady Mary. Yes. As surely as this picture of your pretty timid face is now in my clutches, so surely are you."

His slim strong fingers tightened upon the picture frame as he meditated over it.

"And so, my beauty, I will to Rockingham. If the mountain will not come to Mahomet,

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Mahomet will go to the mountain. The Prince shall not win you, my puss, so easily as Lady Aberdare Merry thinks."

CHAPTER XV

LOVE ON HORSEBACK

A LOVELY Spring morning it was. The green uplands were bathed in sunshine. Along the coverts the bank sides were speckled with primroses. Anemones were in flower under the hazels, and innumerable bluebells shook their abundant blossom in the western breeze. The solemn and sombre depths of Rockingham Forest, which had lain all the winter undisturbed, were waking into life. The green curves of the bracken were peeping up above gorse and bramble, the uncurling ferns rising like bishops' croziers studded with emeralds. They made the floor of the woodland appear as

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though it were crowded with an assembly of ecclesiastics, gathering in the gloom of a vaulted cathedral, whilst the emblematic staves of the clergy were upheld above them as though a procession was being marshalled to traverse the dark nave and aisles under the forest trees. Such a picture does every spring-time conjure up from the unfolding of the bracken ferns.

Everywhere the vigour of the coming season was in evidence. The great sticky bosses and buds of the chestnuts were unloosing their vivid green packages and bursting into leaf, like glad prisoners escaping from their bonds. Over all the forest trees, over all the landscape, a spangling of yellow studs decked the tip of every twig, and from these golden knobs peered the feather-shaped points of baby-leaves, so tenderly green and fragile 'twould seem the morning air would be too cruel for their young life. Yet they dressed the whole

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forest with a living mantle, and everywhere the scene was verdant with their quick and virile growth.

Sheltered from a brisk wind by the dark clumps of evergreen oaks in the park, the deer were browsing on the first young blades of the tender grass. Far away in the valley, raised upon a gentle acclivity, well sheltered by the uplands, were the towers and terraces of Rockingham. A dark avenue of clipped yews was mirrored by the river which they bordered. Along the sequestered bank on the soft turf by the reedy river-side rode a party of eight or nine equestrians—the Duke and his friends, including Lord Vandaleur, who had come down overnight very late and unexpectedly.

They took the park side of the river, but at the statue they pulled up their horses and all drew together in conversation.

The statue, situated in the verdant centre of a clearing, was a fine sculptured figure of Time.

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The figure, of heroic size, represented a man in the prime of life bending his stalwart frame to the vigorous sweep of his scythe. Upon the pedestal, a sun-dial was affixed, and the shadow now registered the hour of eight.

“Time for a morning glass of milk,” said Miss Smith, who was of the party. “And close by is the farm.” She pointed to a thatched roof beyond the trees and turned her horse’s head that way. “We shall not breakfast until nine.”

Lord Vandaleur looked at her. Her strong face, ever full of purpose and character, wore a smile. But it was the smile of a woman who was endeavouring to thwart the dearest hope of his life. He frowned unconsciously and looked at her as a fencer does when he measures swords with his antagonist.

So this was his opponent—this plain woman who asked for a glass of milk.

“I will go with you, Miss Smith, if I may,”

he said, in that suave voice she so detested. "I have heard you speak of the power of the individual will. I believe in your theory. But where is the simple fountain of your inspiration?"

"It is fresh from the cow," she answered sulkily. She disliked Vandaleur so much, she found it difficult to speak to him civilly though he now rode deferentially by her side towards the farm.

"And Lady Mary, who always follows you, I notice—is this the secret of her wonderful complexion?"

"Pure air, fresh morning breezes, and wholesome exercise are sources, if not secrets of good health," she answered.

"But Lady Mary is not following," Vandaleur exclaimed, reining in his horse.

Miss Smith flashed a triumphant glance at him.

"Yonder is Lady Mary," she replied, point-

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ing with her whip. "She is with the Prince, my lord. They will finish their morning ride together."

Vandaleur looked in the direction indicated. Far off he saw them taking their way together at a gallop. He bit his lip and rode gloomily to the farm beside his unwilling companion. The farmer's wife proffered each of them, at request, a glass of new milk. Lord Vandaleur sipped his, and making a wry face, held it up to the light.

"Nay, measter," said the farmer's wife. "An' ye look at t' milk that cross-eyed, tha'lt turn t' milk sour, tha wull."

Miss Smith turned aside to conceal her laughter, but his lordship heard her, and flinging the glass away into a hedge, he rode back angrily alone.

The Duke and Duchess of Rockingham and their newly married daughter, the Countess of Morchester, whose husband had re-joined his

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regiment in Flanders, were already returning homewards. The young Prince and Lady Mary Vere, who had separated from the others at the statue, were now riding in a westerly direction, traversing a gentle ascent towards the forest. A few straggling trees connected the forest with the park, and under these, at the top of the hill, the Prince and Lady Mary reined in their horses for a breather, whilst they surveyed the prospect.

Away in the valley some of the people on horseback from whom they had recently parted were still discernible. Lady Mary waved a handkerchief; the Prince removed his hat and remained bare-headed, watching to see whether Lady Mary's salutation would be recognized. Afar off, one fluttering pennant cheerfully signalled a reply.

"That is mother," said Lady Mary. "I can recognize her even at this distance."

"Yes," responded the Prince, whilst he too

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now waved his handkerchief to answer the salutation of the Duchess. "I do also. Her Grace was on a grey mare. It is like a mother to have eyes for her daughter—even at the back of her head. None of the others saw us."

"Lord Vandaleur and Effie went off together towards the farm," Lady Mary replied, turning her head in that direction.

The Prince had recently been a frequent visitor at Rockingham, and was becoming familiar with the landscape scenes it afforded, but he had never before seen the glorious vision which from this standpoint opened to the beholder. For a while he sat entranced in enthusiastic admiration of the surpassing view.

Yet he did not contemplate the prospect long. A lovelier vision than any landscape ever afforded to the eyes of man challenged the eyes of the Prince in the beauty of Lady Mary Vere, and absorbed him altogether. He looked upon her tenderly. He had declared his love

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for her, and by many trifling incidents, too slight to translate into words, but none the less unmistakable; her quick feminine instincts had interpreted them and inhaled the incense of their sweetness. She knew his affection was genuine and sincere, and in return for his adulation, often eloquent even when unspoken, she gave him the fulness of her heart.

Let it not be believed that the marriages of Princes are usually made by diplomatists and politicians. They more frequently originate in the spontaneous utterances of human nature, and spring from the eternal fountain that wells in the soul of youth. Royalty is moved by the same emotions that stir the pulses of the crowd, and though doubtless many Royal alliances are arranged under the control or at the instigation of statesmen, and though the love-affairs of Princes and Princesses are affected by influences that dominate Courts, and especially by the match-making propensities of numerous

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wire-pullers, feminine as well as masculine, both authorized and unauthorized, there is an inborn waywardness in Princes, as in other youth, which lays claim to its own sweet will.

Lady Mary Vere was unconscious of the working of any secret influence in favour of the engagement by which her heart was now bound. Miss Smith had pulled the strings so effectively that her "children" (as she sometimes called them) were not even aware of her quiet influence upon their lives, although her action had already demonstrated to her friend Alice Meakin the power of the individual will, and had shown what one woman could do for the Empire.

Neither the Duke nor the Duchess had in any way conduced to bring about their daughter's engagement. In so far as the Duke of Rockingham was concerned, indeed, he had done all in his power to thwart the project. In obedience to his expressed wishes Lady Mary

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had herself endeavoured to combat the affection which, almost unconsciously at the beginning, was forming in her bosom in response to the open overtures of the young Prince. But she was too feminine to successfully oppose so charming a lover. She believed it to be, and indeed it was, the uncontrolled wooing of the Prince himself, and the spontaneous reply of her own human heart, making it impossible for her to resist its urgent dictates, that speedily endowed them both with the happiness of true and mutual love.

For some little time Lady Mary and the Prince remained on the brow of the hill overlooking the prospect of the valley. Nature was silent. There was no sound but the jingling of the harness. Lady Mary's roan chafed at his bridle. His fair rider, patting his neck affectionately, bent forward in her saddle and ran her hand along the strap to the buckle. Her nature was soft and kindly and

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she could not endure the least suffering in any animal, least of all in the horse that she herself rode. All this was expressed clearly enough without a word, and as clearly understood by the Prince, who, alighting from his mount, went to the head of the roan to loosen the bridle-strap. The roan expressed his gratitude more plainly even than did his rider, though she thanked the Prince very sweetly for his kindness to her steed.

The Prince remounted, as Lady Mary led the way through some gorse bushes.

"Down the road and through yonder gate," she shouted, turning gracefully in her saddle to look at her companion whilst she cantered along. "It leads to the race-course. It will be just right to-day for a good spin. What do you say?"

He assented readily, as the roan, breaking into a gallop, made down the hill.

She never looked better than when in the

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saddle. The Prince, following her admiringly, allowed his eyes to linger on the neat curve of her waist and the beauty of her undulating figure. Her plain habit fitted her without a wrinkle.

She looked round again, laughing and radiant, pointing her whip. "Over," she cried, gaily. "Over, over!" and put spurs to her roan.

She was a sportsman's daughter—accustomed to the saddle from babyhood. With a huntsman's cry she went at the gate, and cleared it at a bound, the Prince following.

Now all her blood was up and the roan was as full of sport as the rider. She clattered down the gravel road, and riding through some furzes, jumped the low white rails on to the turf of the race-course.

Then she let her horse have his head. The going was superb, and for awhile she lost herself in the simple pleasure of the gallop, with-

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out a thought of the Prince, who was at least fifty lengths behind.

When she saw she had thus out-distanced him, her hand felt the reins, when, with a smile, touched with a dash of mischief, she lifted her whip to urge the roan.

She heard the thud of the hoofs of the Prince's horse behind her with a grim smile. It is a feminine instinct to love being pursued, or is it a dictate of feminine nature to pretend to flight? She determined she would give the Prince a long run before he overtook her.

Both the horses were from the Duke's stables. Lady Mary had often ridden each of them, and knew what they could do. Her roan was the faster for a rattling spin, but the horse ridden by the Prince, a sturdy bay, could last better. His superior staying power was, however, counter-balanced by the weight he had to carry. The Prince could not ride at less than thirteen stone, whereas Lady Mary's weight

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was not much over nine, so the handicap was perhaps, on the whole, in favour of the lady.

Anyhow, she soon increased her lead. Looking back to the Prince she saw him whipping up his horse. She waved him a scoffing gesture of defiance. He could hear the merry peal of her laugh. He spurred on his bay but the distance between them grew greater. There was nothing for it but to settle down to a long steady gallop.

It soon became apparent to the Prince that the roan was the faster horse, but he continued to urge on the bay and determined to be beaten with as little humiliation as possible. A race is always exhilarating, even when as impromptu as on this occasion. He did all he could to catch up, and soon he was almost sure that the distance between them was not being increased. The going was perfect, but Lady Mary, in front, riding as light as a feather, was going at a pace too hot to last. Only horses

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in thorough hard training could keep such a pace up long.

Soon it became evident to the Prince that he was making good. The distance between the horses was now appreciably less. He stooped forward and patted the neck of his bay. He noticed the horse was not in the least distressed, whilst Lady Mary's pace was now slackening. He saw that his horse was the better stayer of the two, and calling on him for a greater effort, he continued at every stride to lessen his disadvantage.

They were now in the straight mile. Before very long he had drawn so near that he had to avoid the turf from the hoofs of the roan.

At the white gates where the judge's box was, opposite the winning-post, he could have passed her, but drawing to her side he kept the bay in hand and studiously remained half-a-length behind. He was too gallant a man to win the race.

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Yet he said triumphantly, "You cannot escape me you see, Mary, however hard you try."

She laughed. She was very pretty. Her hair had blown loose about her face; her cheeks were flushed; her eyes were sparkling.

"I didn't want to escape," she replied simply, her eyes resting upon him in languid happiness. "I wanted to reach the post before you. I won by a length."

"Yes. You were easily the winner," he conceded lightly. "You always will be the winner, Mary, in any race with me—and ever first in my eyes before all others in the world."

She blushed; his voice had become impassioned. Her breath came and went a little quicker as she listened to his fervid accents. His eyes, always large and prominent, put on a new brightness in the splendour of their blue. For a moment a sense almost of fear ran through her veins, and she touched her horse

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with her spurs. But though she thus leapt suddenly away, she smiled as he quickly came to her side again.

They turned their horses off the course, and leaving the sward, took the main road, going at a gentle walk side by side, neither speaking a word.

It was still some distance to the house, though they were going now the nearest way. A little further on they came to the lodge-gate, and leaving the main road, proceeded, still silently, under a fine avenue of old elms, and so through the park towards Rockingham.

"This way," she said, pulling her left rein as they came to a bridle path that crossed the avenue.

"But straight on, surely," he answered, looking at the house, which was now quite near. "Straight on is surely the near way home."

"But I want to go the long way," she answered, looking at him very sweetly.

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For a while they rode side by side, neither speaking a word.

"Of what do you think that you are so silent?" she rallied him suddenly.

"I think," he stammered, "that Love is dumb. And that is why, Mary—that is why I cannot speak."

She laughed, twitted, teased, provoked him for his answer, until he laughed too and capped all her small talk with nonsense and gaiety.

"But this is a pose—this mood of laughter, my Mary," he cried. "Our time of silence was the genuine thing, the true reality."

"It depends on the mood," she answered, twinkling. "My mood now is—mischief," and she struck the Prince's horse with her whip unawares.

The roan sprang forward and reared. The Prince might, perchance, if less capable in the saddle, have been thrown, but, as she knew, he was a perfect rider, and, keeping his seat

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quite firmly, seized her horse by the bridle and led her romping along for a hundred yards. In such youthful exuberance they frolicked homewards, joking and laughing together, again becoming silent or conversational by turns.

So, full of happiness, they chatted intimately as they ambled along together slowly and more slowly on the long way home. He was full of compliment; the minutes were precious now. He became earnest, and in many a graceful phrase spoke easily and sincerely those soft words which best express Love's tender song. His simple candour made him an ideal courtier, and he poured in her ear a sweet eloquence which brought responsive blushes to her cheeks, though she modestly averted her face in the hope she could thus hide them. Dear to her was this honeyed wooing, dearer yet when his impassioned accents stumbled in broken sentences of tumultuous speech. All that she knew of love had been from books, in poetry,

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in music, or in opera. How different was this, the real earnest.

He had a command of language, and like all his family was a linguist. Now and then, when English was too cold to express his yearnings, he quoted an Italian phrase—from Tasso or Rossetti—or he tickled her ears with an ardent couplet from le Gallienne or Walter de la Mare. The Prince loved the work of modern poets and was familiar with their verse. But Lady Mary liked him best when he was at a loss for words altogether, and all the tongues at his command were stricken and silent.

Yet when silence came she longed for him to speak again. How gracious and delightful was his intonation. How different from the bland frigid suavity of Vandaleur. How musical his expression, how gentle the manly ring of his voice.

Only once to man or maid comes Love's delirious note with pristine sweetness.

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Now he would lay upon her arm the gentle pressure of his hand as he urged his heart's message, and she would cease to turn away her face, so that she might look in his eyes as they rode together.

The clatter of their horses' hoofs was a music attuned to lovers' voices. The solitudes of the park, the primroses bespeckling the undergrowth, the vistaed distances beneath the elms, azure with bluebells and bright with yellow daffodils, were in harmony with the spring in their souls.

Fair, pure, holy England was here. Nowhere else did trees grow like these; nowhere else had fair, pure, holy maiden such English loveliness, complexion so softly pink under the healthy tan, eyes so innocently wide, so trustful in their depths of heavenly glow. Yes, heavenly was the only word, for Lady Mary was holy in his eyes, none the less holy because

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she was woman—woman—woman—woman through and through.

The modest provocation of her maiden glances, something of juvenile roguery in her mutterings, her coy bashfulness as her heart recognized a fluttering of awakening ardours in her own heart, communicated to the Prince a passion that thrilled him to the soul. His eyes flamed and sparkled when she looked upon him.

There was no doubt at all about it, Lady Mary and the Prince were in love.

They broke into a canter, as, at the end of the long bridle-way, the house again came in sight, riding together now, rapt and dumb. A groom approached them before they alighted, and the Duke, who had returned nearly two hours before, stepped through the French windows of the library to receive the Prince.

He had already assisted Lady Mary to dismount.

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She ran indoors, light-footed, like a child. The Prince followed her virginal figure with his eyes, and took the Duke's arm into the house.

CHAPTER XVI

EBENBURTIG

SURE enough the news was in the " Morning Post " on the morning after Lord Vandaleur's dinner party, but not in that journal exclusively.

" The Times " made a brief guarded and accurate statement in an unquestionably authoritative paragraph.

" The Mail " was full of it. " The Standard " and " Telegraph," the " Chronicle," the " News "—all made the announcement in the most unmistakable terms. So, too, did other London journals and some of the leading provincial papers as well.

Brief though the interesting statement was,

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people talked of nothing else that morning. The evening newspapers published biographical notices of the engaged couple, and their portraits—not very flattering ones—were in several of the late editions.

The Press, quick to realize what news appeals most deeply to the real interest of the people, recognized that the brief piece of information in the column usually devoted to fashionable intelligence, though announced in plain dry terms, had awakened the public emotion. Editors were ready enough to fan the spark into a flame. There were leading articles on the subject in the next morning's issues, dwelling with patriotic gusto on the advantage to the Realm of this union of hearts, and its possible future consequences.

There was quite a furore in London on the subject, and the people everywhere received the news with remarkable enthusiasm.

Nobody was so proud as Lady Aberdare

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Merry. She went for a drive in the Park, conscious that the halo of a Prophetess, in the only circles that she deemed recognizable, shone around her rather towzled head.

In two or three days there was such popular excitement, and there were such frantic scenes of public delight, that the royal tradesmen spontaneously lit up their illuminations.

Crowds acclaimed the event in song; the streets were full of joyous throngs, boisterous and rollicking. Street vendors became suddenly possessed of an ingenious penny toy which was hawked everywhere and sold in countless thousands. It consisted of a pair of dolls, remotely resembling the engaged pair, one of which at the touch of a button, fell on the other's neck, and made a peculiar sound like a long-drawn kiss. It was amusingly ridiculous and created laughter without in the least degree minimising the loyalty of the mob. National airs were sung everywhere. Sober citizens

danced in the streets. Nothing had been seen like it since Mafeking night.

Meanwhile a public declaration of the event was duly made in both Houses of Parliament. Seriously, calmly, and with even unaccustomed dignity, it was dealt with in the Commons.

The Prime Minister spoke briefly, with his accustomed felicity.

Since the outbreak of the War the conduct of the House of Commons has been sobered, and the behaviour of most members of Parliament has been marked by a considerate and seemly regard for the most exalted ideas of propriety, whatever subject has arisen. There had been little discussion on any event and no party disputation. But the announcement of the Prince's engagement moved the House to a greater extent than any question on which debate has arisen, since the Ulster troubles in the early part of the previous year.

A desultory conversation arose after the party

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leaders had spoken. Members of all parties were manifestly anxious. The ministerial announcement was regarded as raising questions of deep import to the State.

The buzz of excited conversation which always denotes an abnormal interest was prolonged. Questions were put and answered during a growing excitement. The heads of the Opposition met together in solemn conclave. Legal members on both sides repaired to the Library to ransack musty tomes, and to search for precedents.

Precedent there was none. The marriage of H.R.H. the Princess Louise to the heir of the Duke of Argyll, and the marriage of King Edward's daughter to the Duke of Fife were very different events. These formed no precedent for the proposed marriage of the Prince. Further it was agreed that at the time each of the two incidents referred to occurred, the circumstances were materially different from

those which governed the present situation. Besides the cases cited, and others yet less relevant, were the marriages of Princesses of a former generation, but the probabilities of their ever succeeding to the throne, or of their having descendants who would do so, were contingencies so remote that for all practical purposes they might be dismissed.

Members, talking the topic over in the Lobbies, discussed, in the present engrossing topic, an entirely different case. The name now before the House was that of an illustrious Prince whose public acts, tactful behaviour and charm of manner had captivated the people, and who besides was unquestionably in the succession.

Mr. Lloyd put the matter before the House in a manner that spoke the mind of many members.

“ The King’s life,” he said, “ was not a topic that any loyal subject would desire

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to discuss, even although incidentally it did arise. The Prince of Wales was with the British Army in Flanders. Who could say that any man who fought for his country on that bloody field of war was not in danger of his life? Did not this consideration militate in favour of the possible chances of the Prince, whose case was now under consideration? Were not his chances in the succession thereby improved? And though he, too, was in active training and likely, when fit for foreign service, to go to the front, and might therefore meet a glorious death on the field of battle, he might have issue, and it was possible that questions might arise connected with the succession of incalculable importance to the nation.

“ True, the King had sons, brothers of the Prince of Wales, the eldest of whom would inherit the Crown in the unfortunate event of the demise of the heir-apparent, and so with each of them in their due order, but even so

the Prince who now sought the sanction of the House of Commons to his marriage with the daughter of the Duke of Rockingham, could not be considered as so distantly remote from a place in the Royal Succession as to allow the contingency of its possibility to be disregarded, nor would it be by any means incredible, moreover, taking into due account all the possibilities that govern the Future, and all the chances of this mortal state, that the issue of the marriage now proposed, if issue there were, might one day even succeed to the throne.”

Another speech that made considerable impression was that of a speaker whose voice was rarely heard in the Commons, the speech of Mr. Grading. Avowing himself the last of the Whigs, Mr. Grading said that he understood the feeling of the House on the subject of the proposed marriage. He was not himself a believer in the doctrine of the Divine Right of Kings. Kings were men of like passions with

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ourselves. “ They were no better,” he said, “ and no worse than ordinary mortals.” Still a good deal was to be said—though it was perhaps better left unsaid—for it was unmistakably deeply felt, not in that house only—but amongst all thinking people in the country in favour of the law—if it was a law—and if it was not, it was at least a time-honoured custom, not only that the King himself could not marry a subject, but that the members of the Royal Family should be, as they were generally regarded, members of a class by itself, a class ranking so high that they were removed from and set above even the most ancient, the highest, the most illustrious of our nobility. It was well, in his opinion, that there should be, as there had been for long generations, a wide gulf fixed between the nobles and the crown—nay more, between the nobility and the individual members collectively of the Royal House.

He spoke further at considerable length, and in a very learned manner, on some of the more abstruse questions which concern monarchical institutions. Interesting though this portion of his speech was, it cannot here be stated at length without causing the publisher to put such a price upon this volume that the ordinary reader would even find it cheaper to purchase a Complete Edition of the Works of the Poet Laureate.

“ It was easier,” he warned the house with solemn nods and wagging of his finger, “ easier to break down the safeguards which hedged the King than to set them up again.” He deprecated the marriage of the Prince with the Duke of Rockingham’s daughter. He would therefore resolutely oppose the sanction of the House to the proposed marriage.

This is not the medium for the graver and more dignified deliverances of Ministers, nor of the Leaders of the Opposition. Their speeches

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are set forth in Hansard, and were fully reported in the daily journals, but there was a speech which undoubtedly took root in the minds of many members of the House, though no cold report in bare words can reproduce it.

This was the speech of the jovial, breezy member who rejoiced in the cognomen of Squire Bull. He was a man who always filled the House, and whose speeches invariably carried his audience. He spoke with a degree of fluency, yet he rarely finished a sentence. When he came to a halt he dashed into a new flight of eloquence, wandering along without regard to syntax, yet conveying his meaning by a flourish of his arm or an eloquent gesture, which was even better understood than words. He blundered on a path of broken sentences, deviating by parentheses within parentheses from the original intention of his thesis, floundering in a sea of disconnected ideas in a speech beyond the power of any man to parse,

and when he had arrived at a hopeless *impasse*, he would say with a majestic wave of his hand worthy of a Demosthenes: "I will not finish the thought. I see it is already in your minds. You understand me, gentlemen."

And so they did. He put forth the beginning of his ideas, and left them to blossom in the minds of members as they chose. He had such a delightful, good-humoured way with him. His nods were full of meaning. He plunged along in the most magniloquent manner till his grammar was in difficulties, then he took a side path in a parenthesis. His hearers, who it must be borne in mind were all public speakers of sorts, and therefore brother craftsmen with him in the oratorical art, followed him in his most ambitious flights with curious interest, wondering when he entered into one of his accustomed mazes of difficulty how he would get out of it. Well did they know his trouble. They had experienced it them-

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selves. But Squire Bull had an extraordinary capacity for "going on." He would deviate in the most eloquent style, and after a long excursion often managed to come back to pick up his lost verbs in the most unexpected way, so as to sometimes honour his grammar after all by feats of verbiage so dexterously accomplished that they were characterised by another honourable member as acrobatic.

More often he would stop in the middle of a burst of oratory and toss a knowing wink at his audience, which sent it into roars of laughter. "I see, Mr. Speaker, that the honourable members of this House fully appreciate my point. Then why further pursue the argument? Let us turn to another, gentlemen. The question before the House is not merely the marriage of the Prince to the daughter of his Grace the Duke of Rockingham—the marriage that is to say of a Prince of the Blood-Royal and in the direct succession, with the

daughter of an English peer—it involves the question of the marriages of all our Royal Princes, Princes now infants. Mr. Speaker, I will be so bold as to say that this House desires that our English Princes, wherever they seek their brides, may seek them no more in Germany (*loud and long-continued cheers*). We have had enough Germans in our Royal Family during the last seven reigns to last us for a thousand years (*cheers*). Yes, gentlemen, and this I would repeat even if the question before this honourable House were the marriage of the Prince of Wales himself (*murmurs*) or the marriage of any one of his Royal brothers. England possesses also and is proud of, a Royal Princess, the only daughter of our beloved King (*murmurs*). The marriage of this Royal lady might any day become a subject for the consideration of the House. The terrible but glorious war in which so many nations were now engaged found us shoulder

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to shoulder with our brethren in arms, our loyal Allies. Sir, we love our Allies. We should like to prove to them our regard. We should like to shower upon them gifts and blessings. Nothing we had was too great or too valuable for us to bestow upon Russia, upon Belgium, upon France, upon those great countries whose children were now shedding their blood with ours on one common field, no gift we had was too great for us to give them, except this one precious woman—Britain's daughter. The hand of the Princess Mary was her own, her heart was her own, certainly it was not for the House of Commons to say where she should bestow them, but it was within their province, by statute, to say where her Royal Highness should *not* bestow them. And, sir, this young, sweet and beautiful Princess was so beloved of England that we deem her too precious to give away in marriage to any but a true-born, true-bred son of Britain, her life too—— ”

At this point in the honourable member's speech the Speaker rose.

Squire Bull remained standing. But the Speaker, who was loudly cheered, addressed him in accents of unusual gravity. He said:

He was sure the honourable member was a loyal subject of the Crown, but he had unfortunately deviated into the ventilation of topics that were not now under consideration. The subject before them was simple. It related exclusively to a narrow issue. Did the Commons consent to this one marriage in particular; to the marriage of his Royal Highness, whose name was before the House, with Lady Mary Vere. Nothing else was before them; the question of the marriages of the Royal Princes generally was not under discussion, and it was to be deprecated that so wide an excursion had been made. He hoped the honourable members would confine their attention to what was really before them.

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As the Speaker resumed his seat, Squire Bull resumed. He bowed to the Speaker. He regretted with sincere apologies that there had been occasion for the Speaker's intervention. He deferentially accepted his ruling, and he trusted the remarks he had made would not be misunderstood. With regard to the issue directly before the House, the marriage, that is to say, of the Prince with the Duke of Rockingham's daughter, it was difficult to discuss it in all its bearings without referring to the subject of German marriages generally, as affected by the present diabolical war. In order to understand the precise proposition before the House, he trusted the Speaker would permit him to refer to these.

“ Sir, the people of Great Britain are forming new opinions on many subjects since the outbreak of this bloody war. The bombardment of Scarborough has opened the eyes of Englishmen. They can see further now than

before that murderous event. They have a clearer and a more far-seeing vision. It has been an undeserved advantage for the Fatherland that Germany has long been a happy hunting-ground for brides, for the Princes of all Europe. The Fatherland—let them call it so—is full of a vast number of small Royalties, many of them as poor as Church-mice, possessed of enormous families, all of them regarded as *ebenburtig*, which, being translated, is ‘equal in birth to Royalty,’ and deemed fit to marry the most illustrious Princes in Europe. Sir, we want no more matrimonial union with these people. These poverty-stricken German Princelings have been accustomed to haunt European Courts and often build very fine nests for themselves in alien countries in high places from which they look down with patronizing condescension on the inferior inhabitants of the land of their adoption. Their Royal sisters fre-

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quently become allied to European Sovereigns. Their Princesses have been made Colonels of German Regiments. I believe, sir, the Kaiser's only daughter was made the Colonel of the Death's Head Hussars, and that the Emperor Wilhelm himself has spoken of her riding at the head of her regiment when it comes to invade England. That lady is of the same flesh and blood as the rest of them. Gallantry compels us even still to speak of her with respect—though her father is at the head and front of Britain's enemies, though the sword of her husband, the Duke of Brunswick, is drawn against us. We will say nothing in dishonour of her. We will not forget that the blood of our great Queen Victoria enriches her veins. Most of all we will not forget that she is a woman, and on that account alone entitled to the chivalrous respect of every Englishman (*cheers*). She is of the family from which European Princes have been accustomed to

seek their brides. Princelets and Princelings of that family are superabundant, and there are less illustrious Princesses in the prolific offshoots of that family more than enough to provide wives for a numerous progeny of Princes. Poor and even obscure in some respects, these ladies are regarded as *ebenburtig*—they are equal in birth to Royalty, they are considered eligible to become the bride of any throne. But, sir, are there no English families *ebenburtig*? Are there no British ladies *ebenburtig*? (*loud and long-continued cheers*). Are there not ladies, daughters of the highest of our British Peers, equal, nay, superior in rank, in fortune, in estate, to these *ebenburtig* daughters of German Princelings? Or is it that the most illustrious daughters of Britain lack ‘kultur’ and thus cannot be regarded as *ebenburtig*? Sir, we are all fathers of families, and I—(*here the house was convulsed with loud laughter; many members interrupting and pro-*

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testing)—well, sir, though there may be some bachelors present in this house, that is no sufficient reason why they may not be fathers of families (*cries of 'Order—order'*)—at any rate, Mr. Speaker—they have the future before them even if they have no past. I would rather our Princes remained bachelors all their days than that they should continue to make alliances with our German foes and rear a brood derived from the womb of our enemies.”

“ It was for this reason ” (the hon. member said in conclusion) “ that he trusted the House would give its unanimous consent to the marriage of the Prince with the daughter of the Duke of Rockingham, for he was assured that no greater political question was before the country than the question of the Re-Anglicization of the British Royal House.”

CHAPTER XVII

AT WINDSOR

IN the morning the Press was full of a new word—*ebenburtig*.

Lady Mary Vere rarely read the daily newspapers, and the Prince never. He had been accustomed to obtain all essential information about current events by word of mouth, from his tutors. Mr. Finlayson, his present companion and familiar, was an expert in this duty. He was so delightful a *raconteur* that he had the art of conveying the news in the easiest manner, but he took care that his Royal charge was fully and regularly informed. If some rather tedious speech or important article had

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to be put into the Prince's mind, Mr. Finlayson would read it aloud to him, and if the Prince became a restive listener, he would say quite firmly: " This is an item your Royal Highness cannot afford to be ignorant about," and in his gentle, courteous but resistless way he compelled the Prince to listen to him to the end. Nor did his Royal Highness endeavour to resist. An intelligent man, he desired to be well-informed, and has always been accustomed to be thus spoon-fed. But it is astonishing how thoroughly grounded the Prince is in the world's daily affairs. He is quite up in all current events, and has a complete knowledge of the daily history of his own times.

The Prince was on a visit at Windsor, as also were the Duke and Duchess of Rockingham with their daughter.

As soon as the Prince was out of his bath, and whilst he was dressing, Mr. Finlayson, with " The Times " in his hand, related to his

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charge an account of the previous night's debate in Parliament. The Prince, naturally, was much interested, and insisted on hearing every word of it read to him. He laughed loudly at many of the things that had been said, and especially at the ebenburtig speech of Squire Bull. He dismissed his valet and sat in his shirt-sleeves before the fire in his dressing-room listening very eagerly as Mr. Finlayson read the speeches, nor did he complete his toilet until the whole debate had been retailed.

He had been much amused, but as he went on with his dressing he spoke seriously about certain aspects of the debate, now and then whistling a bar or two of a popular air or looking out of the window down Long Walk whilst he put on his necktie, or otherwise proceeded with his toilet.

"How fresh the air is this morning," he said with a relish, as a gust blew in through the open

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window, and striking an attitude he exclaimed in mock-heroics: " Gentlemen of the House of Commons, you use a great number of words to express the thoughts of your honourable minds. You have cost us our usual morning canter. Until when is the debate adjourned, sir, did you say? "

" Until Monday next, your Royal Highness."

" Ah! Then we must possess our souls in patience—unless I can get Mary to elope with me to-morrow and get married at—Englefield Green."

" That would make your Highness's marriage morganatic."

" So it would never do. Well—and the war news? "

" Nothing fresh this morning, sir."

" What—have my cousins killed no babies and dropped no bombs? "

" Just as usual, sir. They have shelled a

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Cathedral, slain a few peasants—and bombarded a village-school. Only three children and a priest were killed at the school.”

“ But it is terrible, my dear Finlayson, terrible! I often feel as though I could weep for the rest of my days. What a weight William must have on his conscience! Our wedding must be a very quiet affair, Finlayson, eh? Only a few guests—none but our intimates. Don’t you think so, sir? ”

“ If you were to wait till the war is over, Sir, all the world would wish to be at your wedding.”

“ Wait till the war is over! My dear Finlayson, that might be years. I shall marry—and then—alas, that I should leave her so soon—but then straightway will I go to the war. England needs every man she can muster. Come. I am dressed. Let us take a stroll before breakfast—as we are robbed of our ride.”

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They lounged out on to the terrace together with careless gait. But suddenly the Prince pulled himself up. "I don't think—I mean—I think I'll go alone, sir," he said to Mr. Finlayson. He had caught a glimpse of Lady Mary in the distance, and he strode towards her with quick steps.

Her back was towards him as he overtook her. She too was reading "The Times"—she who rarely looked at any paper but "The Queen" and the illustrated journals, was engrossed. At his well-known footstep, however, she turned her face beaming with smiles.

They greeted. "You have seen?" she said, extending the newspaper laughingly, and they talked gaily of the debate.

The Queen's private gardens at Windsor consist of a series of terraces with flower borders. There are innumerable parterres with clipped box edgings intersected by trim

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walks and gravel paths, which lead by broad flights of steps to fresh revelations of flowers and lawns, and by wide floral avenues elaborately adorned with marble statuary to a famous prospect commanding the Long Walk—an avenue of magnificent forest trees extending far across Windsor Park to an equestrian statue of George the Third.

Here Lady Mary and the Prince sauntered together in conversation, sweetly though unconsciously influenced by the beauty and the fragrance of the flowers, until tiring of her promenade, Lady Mary leant against the pedestal of a Venus.

She looked up at the goddess whose marble limbs rose high above her, and feigned a shiver.

“Are you cold, Mary?” he asked, anxiously. “We had better go in, perhaps. You have no wraps.”

“But I think it does me good to be here. It helps me to realize that I am not *eben-*

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burtig," she exclaimed with mock petulance.

" I recognize myself a very inferior being. I wonder if these goddesses came to life—as in Pygmalion and Galatea—would they be admitted at Rominton or Wilhelmshohe. Would they be *ebenburtig*? " She paused a few moments, looking up again at the statue and then at others beyond. " Juno and poor Psyche yonder—and Venus. I wonder."

" Put it the other way, Mary. Would Jupiter and Juno admit William and Eitel, Fritz and Joachim. Venus—— "

" Venus would admit any male person, darling. Venus was a shocking, dear old thing by all accounts. But—oh, what a foolish world it is, darling! Columns—columns—look at them; all about us—insignificant us," and she held out " The Times " at arm's length.

" Let us go in to breakfast, Mary, sweet," he said, putting his arm round her waist, and

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thus strolling with her along the garden walk.

“ I’ve heard every word of the debate.”

“ Yes, but even now they haven’t finished. The debate is adjourned. Dearest! Do you think they will let us? ”

“ Why, of course, my dear Mary,” and lifting her hand to his lips he covered it with kisses.

“ Well, you know, darling, at first even father himself was against it. He opposed it furiously. He said it would be morganatic. That’s very dreadful, isn’t it? The sort of thing that even Venus would pause at.”

The Prince laughed. He knew she was only chaffing.

“ And that dreadful Commons! No one can rely upon them. You never know what they will do. I’m really frightened. Some one may get up and make a speech and lead them anywhere. Mr. Lloyd George hasn’t spoken yet.”

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“ Don’t let us talk ourselves into anxiety, Mary,” he answered, swinging her hand in his own, “ or we shall have to form a party to carry our case through.”

“ Winnie would be for us. I’ll get his mother to coax him,” said Lady Mary, but whether playfully or in real concern was not apparent. “ Ah! The King! He has come in from his ride. Let us hurry.”

They walked more quickly towards the Castle. On a garden seat outside the morning-room window sat the Duke of Rockingham, immersed in the columns of a morning newspaper.

Lady Mary was upon him before he knew and kissed his cheek to her “ Good-morning.”

“ What a fuss, Mary,” he answered, “ oh, what a fuss you have made, child,” and he threw down his paper with a merry laugh.

The Prince saluted him and he the Prince with some little formality.

“ You see what nice things we said about your Royal Highness in the Lords,” the Duke observed.

“ The Peers were very polite,” replied the Prince. “ And if the Commons were a little rude to some of my family, at least they showed their loyal hearts.”

“ The Commons are accustomed to be delightfully frank,” said the Duke simply.

“ But Lord Vandaleur’s speech in your House—— ”

“ The House into which I brought him,” the Duke exclaimed with indignation. “ It was my doing to make Lord Vandaleur a Peer. He is an ingrate. I have ordered him never to set foot in Rockingham again.”

“ Has he offended your Grace? ”

“ Worse; he has insulted me. But hush! Do not let Mary hear. I would not have the dear child’s peace disturbed.”

“ What! Would he injure Mary? ”

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“ Through me. He thinks it in his power to do so, forsooth! But he does not know me, nor the proud integrity of our race. He will rue the day when he touched my honour. But it is well. He has exposed his own baseness. That is all.”

“ Your Grace! If this man injures Mary, be his reason just or unjust, I am his enemy and bitterest foe. There is—— ”

“ Have no fear for Mary, your Royal Highness,” interrupted the Duke. “ She is beyond the reach of his envenomed tongue. Vandaleur has the wisdom and guile of the serpent, but I have the one true sword to pierce the vitals of that viper—my spotless honour.”

The Prince took the Duke’s hand and pressed it. “ I am sure of it,” he replied warmly. “ As confident of that as of my own. But can Lord Vandaleur delay our marriage?”

“ Not by one hour. But enough. I ignore him. For me, henceforth, that man does not

even exist. Never let the name Vandaleur be mentioned in my hearing again. From this moment he passes out of my life. Mary! Mary! Come hither. Let me repeat to you in the presence of His Royal Highness how delighted I am that you two are to become one. Put your hand in his, my dear."

Lady Mary did so very shyly, whilst her father put his arms around them both in a fond embrace.

"Come, children," said the Duchess, appearing on the terrace through the French windows, and turning her cheek to the Prince and to her daughter in turn. "Kiss me, quick, and go in. The bacon hasn't come in yet because you haven't, but everyone is ready. His Majesty has returned from his ride. Have you seen the newspapers this morning?"

The Prince made a gesture towards Mr. Finlayson, who answered:

"I have read to his Royal Highness, five

columns of 'The Times,' your Grace—the whole debate.”

“There was a good leading article in 'The Times.' Indeed, all the journals are enthusiastic,” said the Duchess. “But 'Punch' is the best of all, isn't it?”

“Punch!” exclaimed Mr. Finlayson. “Ah! This is Wednesday. I confess I had not thought of looking at 'Punch,' the debate being only last night.”

“'Punch'? Are we in 'Punch'?” asked the Prince. “Show me.”

“A capital cartoon,” said the Duchess, walking to a table and handing a copy of “Punch” to the Prince.

Mr. Punch, like less distinguished people, is sometimes a little above himself. He was so in this particular issue. With audacious foresight, no doubt an essential quality in the political cartoonist, the artist had anticipated what would be said in the debate, and though

his cartoon must have been drawn thirty-six hours before the event, it was published at the very moment the clock was striking—so to speak. It hit the very thought of the hour and phrased the idea that was on the tip of every man's tongue. By a happy conception, Lady Mary was represented as locking up the Prince in the heart of Britannia, whilst she herself also had stepped inside. A number of German Princesses with their heads high in the air, stood outside deeply mortified. In the background crowding millions of British subjects were indicated making loud acclamations of joy, whilst a newsboy hawked his papers to the cry: "Brilliant engagement. Great English victory. German disaster." A mere bald description of the cartoon can give no idea of the humour the artist had impressed upon his work, which was filled besides with witty points of detail, as full of meat as "Punch's" own indescribable cover.

“ You are made immortal,” said the Duke, straining his neck over the Prince’s shoulder, his daughter eagerly looking at the cartoon at the same moment. “ What is the name in the corner—Raven Hill or Partridge? ”

“ Does it matter—the name? ” asked the Duchess.

“ My dear Lavinia,” the Duke replied magisterially, “ do you not realise that Mary will live henceforth and for ever in English history? The very *best* history of our own times is in the pages of ‘ Punch.’ The names of these clever men do matter. The ‘ Punch ’ cartoonists are our real living historians. Yes, and they are themselves immortal, too, because they confer immortality. The breath of satire is the breath of Life. The Pagan Gods would be forgotten but for Lucian. He lives for all time through the gods of his mockery, and all we know of them is through his raillery.”

CHAPTER XVIII

WITH FATHER THAMES

It was a perfectly lovely day. Summer was not due, but she had made a popping visit during a wet and rather cheerless Springtime. The blossom was on the apple-trees, the buds of may were opening upon the hawthorns. By the riverside the king-cups were golden-bright and the men at the boat-builders' were getting out their craft, whistling at their work too, whilst they put on the varnish.

A casual acquaintance of Miss Smith, who was a river-lover, found himself on this gorgeous day at Mead-Menham. He had a mind to go out in his punt with Miss Smith, whom he considered he had somewhat

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neglected of late. He enjoyed talking to that semi-illustrious personage, and her Pekinese dog, Oto, was very pleased to go out in the punt too.

The majority of "river people" do not know the river at this time, though it is infinitely more delightful to be swirling on its broad bosom beneath the over-arching trees, when the young leaves are uncurling their tender digits on the tips of the boughs, and the rushes are still putting forth their fresh green bayonets, than during the languid summer days.

As Miss Smith and her friend were loitering on the landing-stage waiting for the punt to be groomed and cushioned, they fell into unnecessary conversation.

"What are you doing now?" Miss Smith asked, though she was more interested in her frolicking dogs than in any answer her question might evoke.

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“ I am writing,” he answered, “ as usual.”

“ What about? ”

“ About England and Germany—of course. No professional scribe writes now of anything else, either in England or in Germany. We are all writing current history—we scribblers.”

“ Ah, history ! ” exclaimed Miss Smith, knitting her stern brows. “ But what is history? ”

The scribbler laughed. “ More often than not history is a misrepresentation of national events. History is usually written in the interest of a political party.”

“ What was Voltaire’s phrase?—‘ *Fable convenue*.’ Yes, that is history,” Miss Smith assented sadly.

“ There is always a tendency on the part of political parties to misrepresent the facts. And so yet more with religious parties. Not to put too fine a point upon it, the Sects are prone to be liars.”

“ Every lie comes home to roost,” rejoined

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Miss Smith, ceasing to take any interest whatever in Oto, for she was a great lover of truth, and the strain of earnestness in the conversation began to interest her.

“Yes. The daily journal is not doing the political cause which it favours any advantage by continuous misrepresentations of the truth.”

“But few journals are free from the vice of perversion,” Miss Smith remarked.

“That is so. They are zealous for their cause. Now the zealot cannot be a judge. The advocate can rarely see both sides.”

“But deliberate misrepresentation,” said Miss Smith, shaking her head. “That is the German way. We must set our faces against that in England.”

“Yes,” said the acknowledged scribbler, who, certes, was also an unconscionable talker, “the German mode is to deceive, to impose that upon the mind of her people which she thinks it would be well for them in her own

interests to believe. The German journalist endeavours—not to illumine his readers with the truth—but to obscure their reason by a misrepresentation of things, men, occurrences, all the facts of life. The Germans are blunt enough in telling such truths as they think fit to let out of the bag, when it suits them to speak truth, but as a rule secrecy, mystery, and ignorance are fostered, and with a callousness that betrays the inbred hardness of their hearts, the most unscrupulous lies are used by their supermen to deceive the common herd. England is far from immaculate, but she does not do things that way. Her object is to enlighten, to put truth into the minds of the people, to represent facts as they are, belittling nothing, magnifying nothing, extenuating nothing, but stating the whole of everything without concealment, and with references to the fullest detail. The aim of her writers is to disseminate truth, to impart knowledge.”

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"Knowledge is the seed of wisdom," said Miss Smith in her own earnest way.

"And therefore wisdom is the fruit of knowledge," he replied. "England's position in the world is owing to her love of truth. Truth is but another name for knowledge. And Truth is England's Word."

"You make me feel proud of my country," Miss Smith said with enthusiasm.

"Of course, I speak broadly and generally," he continued. "There are exceptions in England to this high ideal, and in Germany there are notable exceptions to what I deem her low ideal."

By this time Miss Smith had discovered some sandwiches in her handbag, and Oto and the Sealyham, to their infinite delight, had discovered them too.

So no one was listening to the scribbler, but he proceeded with his dissertation all the same, quite glibly, whilst Miss Smith, with sublime

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indifference to his remarks, was amusing her dogs, by whom she was in turn amused.

“Fiction, like history,” he continued, “may be veracious or it may be false. The small volume enclosed within the covers of this book is fiction” (he held it fondly to his breast) “avowedly fiction from the first word to the last. But there is more veracity in it than in most history. The characters of this book do not in fact exist and never breathed the sweet invigorating English air which pervades the atmosphere of its three hundred and twenty pages. Not one of these characters is real, though more than once there are references to living personages who are herein specified by name and who are known to the world, in which they do in truth live, move and have their being. Let no reader think this or that living man or woman is intended under the guise or cloak of any Royal character drawn within these covers. There is no such intention by

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the author. He has simply delineated a type. But the fiction is apparent, the truth is apparent, there is no attempt to mystify or to misrepresent. It is a book of truth. It is a book with a real mission. The characters of fiction if they are to live even for one brief year must be creations. The characters of fiction may put on a more robust existence than the mortal men and women amongst whom they were born, and for whose delectation or instruction they were delineated. Pickwick and Pegotty and Mr. Squeers, Sam Weller and Dick Swiveller's immortal waistcoat, as well as the dear, the delightful Tom Pinch, have out-lived most of their actual human contemporaries. But Fiction to live must be true. No other can survive. That is why the Quinneys will become immortal though they were only born last year. Given truth, Fiction may be more virile than Fact, Imagination may be more real than the Actual, and Fiction

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therefore may be truer than History itself. But sometimes Fiction has a different mission than the creation of immortal characters.

“Sometimes Fiction has but one Truth to preach to the world. It is so with my new book.”

Whilst all this monologue was being delivered to everybody in general but to nobody in particular, Miss Smith became deeply engaged in conversation with a lady and gentleman who had just stepped out of a well-appointed, pair-horsed carriage, which had stopped near Mead-Menham Lock.

They had driven down to Boulter's raft and were themselves about to sun themselves in a boat and enjoy a quiet saunter on the Thames.

The literary man was still turning over the pages of his manuscript, though Oto was frisking about wagging his beautiful bushy tail and reproachfully asking him in plain English (not in Chinese as might have been expected from

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a red Pekinese dog) why he did not get into his punt and take him too, when Miss Smith presented the lady and gentleman who had recently alighted from the victoria and pair.

“ Lady Mary Vere and his Royal Highness,” said Miss Smith with a profound curtesy to the latter.

“ I take a paternal interest in you both,” said our author, with deep respect, but with a curious expression as he tucked his manuscript book under his arm. “ Your Royal Highness has doubtless recognized in Miss Smith the power of one determined mind.”

The Prince did not quite understand, but he raised his hat to Miss Smith and made a low bow.

She looked a little embarrassed and glanced at Lady Mary; then she said, with a large smile that exhibited every one of her good sound teeth:—

“ Sir, permit me to explain my friend. I am

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a believer in the power of the individual will, by which I mean the power of any determined person to achieve a definite attainable object. I am convinced also of this, that every woman can do very much for her country."

Again she glanced meaningly at the fair and beautiful girl leaning so happily on the Prince's arm.

He regarded her tenderly. "One English woman may enhearten all the Empire," said the Prince.

Lady Mary blushed and looked up very shyly at her royal lover, who, disengaging his arm, now stepped into the punt. He held out his hand to his *fiancée* and assisted her in also.

Then, standing side by side, they each took a pole and began to punt down the river, their graceful figures moving together in rhythmic harmony, a fine, healthy, athletic pair, their mutual eyes fastened upon each other very

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lovingly and their hearts pulsing as one, as lovers' hearts have pulsed for ages past.

"I hope they will be very happy," whispered Miss Smith musingly, "Very, very happy."

She followed them with her eyes benignly, the more so as quite recently Love had entered her own life and made it His Domain.

For the War has made Love very busy.

Throughout the Empire, ever since the first call of the bugle and the drum brought men rallying to the Flag to undergo those martial exercises which in a country unprepared for conflict and without arms are necessary to fit men for battle, there has been leisure to spare, as well as hard work enough, and Nature has stirred the primal instincts in the heart of Youth to tenderer depths than the love of Country.

In the hours of duty the roads have been thronged with men in khaki, on the march. In the hours of leisure the vernal lanes have been full of co-ambulating lovers with palpitating

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hearts yearning for the silences and solitudes of Nature. The copse and the bracken have echoed with sibilant whispers, the startled hare has abandoned the brake. From hedges hung with honeysuckle and virgin's bower, from woodland glades scented with clematis and wild-rose, a murmuring music of maidens' voices has arisen in the stillness accompanied by the deeper bass. Green arbours have stirred with amorous notes attuned to the dulcet carolling of birds. Strong hearts and tender bosoms have beat as one under the soft influences and sweetnesses of Spring. Men going forth to fight have been full of emotional ardours, and generous maidens, sensitive and touched to tears, have yielded in delirious anguish to the impassioned pleadings of the Brave. The eternal troth has been plighted. Love has planted on them twain His ineffable kiss.

Heroes, patriots, men marching to Duty

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have worn around their heads an unconscious halo, Love's holy coronal.

Even in the crowded streets, women's faces have appeared, softened, beatified by haunting delicious memories, blissful remembrances of His un-imaginable raptures, His abiding presence.

So, in a qualified manner, Miss Smith, whilst regarding the lovers before her, was almost lost in a day-dream of her own.

Her dream was of Motherhood. "What can a woman do for the Empire?" she murmured to herself.

And a glow was upon her as she answered, "She can give to her Land, a Son."

A million and a million new sons will be needed for the Empire.

Her companion's thoughts were on a variant similar as he muttered, though inaudibly and in disjointed sentences, "The crown of Britain.

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The throne of England. May our future Queens be bone of England's bone; flesh of England's flesh.

“ Or from Canada, from Australia, from New Zealand, from Africa, why not some day from one of these, our children—a Queen? A British Queen! ”

A smart launch with the Stars and Stripes fluttering at her stern went spanking down the river, filled with a gay party from the States.

“ Or even from America? ” he murmured, but this last in a tone of interrogation.

Whilst so musing he observed that His Royal Highness and Lady Mary Vere were changing their course.

The punt turned in mid-stream and approached the raft again, for the men had omitted to put in the paddles.

“ Miss Smith believes,” said the Prince, while they lingered at the landing-stage, “ Miss Smith believes in the power of the individual

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will. You, sir, I gather, believe in the magic power of Fiction. But I do not learn what especial truth you desire to inculcate."

"This, your Royal Highness,"—and he stood bareheaded: "This: the very truth that you are about yourself to teach by your approaching marriage. The affection sincerely entertained by the people of the British Empire for the King and for all the members of the Royal Family is deep-seated.

"But if this profound love and respect for the Monarchy is to continue, the Germanization of the Royal Family, which ever since the accession of George the First has been a persistent habit of the Crown, as evidenced by most of the Royal marriages, should henceforth cease, and in lieu of it, if the Monarchy is to endure firmly established in the hearts of the people, it would be of infinite advantage to Re-Anglicize it for England's sake by matrimonial alliances with families of British birth

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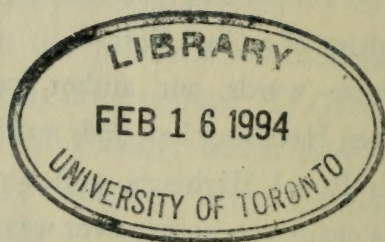
and lineage, so that in the course of time our future Kings may inherit in their veins a more recent strain of English blood; otherwise——”

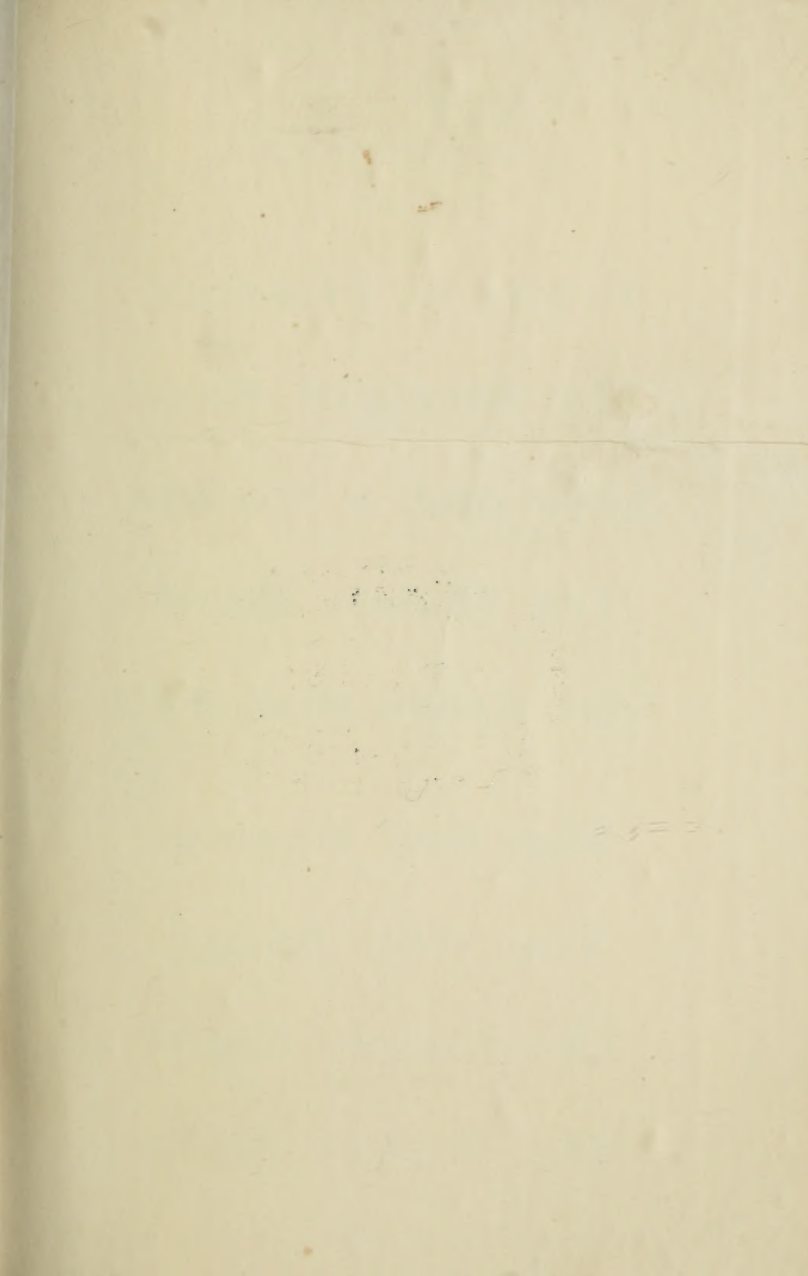
“ Do not falter, I beg,” said the Prince, in his kindly way. “ Proceed. Otherwise——”

“ Otherwise, Sir, I fear the loyal and the disloyal elements which exist in this as in all nations may some day conflict with each other, and the present frightful European struggle may thus be eclipsed by the lesser but more intimate horror of a Civil War.”

With these words our author raised his ancient green Homburg hat, and, making a low bow to his Royal Highness, and a yet lower bow, as his custom to women ever was, to Lady Mary Vere, retired to his native and much-beloved obscurity.

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